

**At Home In Canada:  
The Refugee Experience**

**A Research Project  
on the Implementation of the HIPPY Program  
in Newly Arrived Refugee Communities**

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## Case Study

*I see a lot. I can see a lot. At the first visit to their house, they were not totally aware of what I was bringing them, what HIPPY is, and what education is. However, their minds were full of questions like how will they find a place to live, how they will find work? Education was the furthest thing from their minds and therefore I didn't feel very welcome. It felt like there was no connection between them and myself. When I began with the home visits, I started to build that bridge, I talked to them about how other people appreciate the HIPPY program and the education for their children and themselves. After the first few weeks, let's say one month, I started seeing the interaction between the mom and the kids; the kids were happy, clapping their hands. They would sit around me, like I am their grandmother, and that touched me. At first, I was the one who called each time to remind them of the scheduled time, but after a while, they started calling me to confirm the appointment. They would say, "we don't want to miss the program." When I mentioned that the contract may finish in March, she would say no, I want my son to benefit from the curriculum! I heard the parent say this and it made me happy; it was a good sign about the impact of the program.*

– HIPPY Home Visitor

## Section 1: Introduction

### HIPPY CANADA REFUGEE RESEARCH PROJECT

HIPPY Canada (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters program) carried out an internal research project in the winter of 2017. Twelve HIPPY Home Visitors from various sites across the country worked with 188 refugees who had arrived in in 2016-2017. We were curious about the responses of refugees to the HIPPY program and HIPPY Home Visitors, and we wanted to determine whether the HIPPY program was a suitable early intervention strategy. HIPPY requires a 30-week commitment by family members of one-hour weekly home visits with a Home Visitor and 15-20 minutes daily of reading, playing and completing activities in the weekly packet with their child, five times a week. We asked if the program commitment was too much for people dealing with the difficult circumstances they had just left and the complexities of arriving as a refugee in a new country.

The interviews comprised three sections. In the first we asked the Home Visitors to describe what kinds of issues families confronted on arrival to Canada; in the second we asked them about the adjustments required to accommodate program delivery so that refugee families were successful in the HIPPY program; and, in the third, we asked the HIPPY Home Visitors to describe the types of changes that they observed in the family and in the parent-child relationships that they believed derived from participation in the program.

Findings from interviews are cited in this paper regarding the qualitative results of that research (*please see Appendix #1 for Quantitative Summary of Home Visitors' Comments*). We collected recommendations for implementation of the HIPPY program to serve newly arrived refugees. These results may apply beyond the HIPPY program. We have relied heavily in this document on the observations of the Home Visitors who are the experts in this area. We found that their stories illuminated our understanding of the often heart-wrenching situations the families were in, and with which the Home Visitors were confronted. Their stories helped us understand that rolling out a program such as HIPPY requires flexibility, compassion, and a lot of support. *Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes to follow are from one of the 12 HIPPY Home Visitors interviewed.*

HIPPY is an outcomes-based organization and program. We collect data with a well-structured Performance Management System and Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), a dynamic online database. ETO tracks the demographics, efforts made by Home Visitors, and participants' outcomes. This paper blends the refugee outcome data captured from the ETO with the qualitative information derived from the interviews. This paper blends the outcome data captured from the ETO with the qualitative information derived from the interviews. This is research with a small sample of Home Visitors who were subject to management approaches that varied from site to site. Nevertheless, responses from most Home Visitors were remarkably similar. Therefore, we strongly believe that the results of this research will become critical in the future training of HIPPY staff and a springboard to further research that will assist both HIPPY and other similar

programs and organizations to better meet the needs of newly arrived refugees – and support them more efficiently in their settlement into Canadian life.

## HOW DOES THE HIPPY PROGRAM OPERATE?

The HIPPY program is an evidence-based program that works with families in the home to support parents, primarily mothers, in their critical role as their child's first and most important teacher. HIPPY strengthens families and communities by empowering mothers to actively prepare their children for success in school. It operates for 30 weeks a year over three years for parents of three-, four-, and five-year-old children. The HIPPY program started in Israel almost five decades ago and currently operates in 11 countries around the world.

Program features include: the recruitment of isolated, low-income, newcomer, and refugee families as program participants; home visits by a member of their peer community to reach out to these families; group meetings to increase social inclusion; employment of newcomer and refugee parents as Home Visitors (graduates of the HIPPY program); provision of a parent-led preschool curriculum to improve the success of their children in school; and training parents to develop skills necessary to guide their children through the curriculum and prepare them to start school successfully.

HIPPY Home Visitors share the same life circumstances as the mothers in the program who may be hard to reach because of social isolation, poverty, language, or other cultural issues. They support mothers so they feel comfortable participating. When paired with a Home Visitor, moms develop their skills, confidence, and self-esteem. Home Visitors build bridges to the larger community, ending families' isolation and helping moms actively prepare their kids for success in school. In the research study, one Home Visitor explained:

*I am from the same culture; when they talk about their trauma and their circumstances, they talk to somebody that can understand. It is not about the language, it is about the experience they went through. I think this is the reason that they stay in the program, because I am giving them support and listening to their challenges and difficulties.*

On average, Home Visitors are employed 20 hours per week and receive four to five hours of weekly training that supports them in their work with families and in their transition to other work or higher education.

Through our agreement with HIPPY International, HIPPY Canada provides site licenses in Canada to not-for-profit settlement and community organizations to deliver the HIPPY program. These partners are selected because they have the capacity to embed the HIPPY program in a system of services. HIPPY Home Visitors connect to these and other social services that support families in their settlement journey.

The HIPPY Canada national office provides professional development, quality control, and curriculum development to HIPPY sites across the country. They innovate, work to improve each aspect of the program and its delivery, and they share best practices with HIPPY sites.

HIPPY Canada develops and provides all sites with a robust Performance Management program. We ensure that coordinators and Home Visitors are trained in entering real-time efforts into the ETO system and that they monitor ongoing Home Visitor and parent changes. HIPPY Canada produces each site's annual Performance Management Reports and monitors all Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-funded HIPPY sites to ensure program fidelity and positive settlement.

HIPPY Canada provides Coordinators and Home Visitors with a mixed-method professional education program in eight topic areas important to ensuring their success in professional roles. As part of our Home Visitor professional education program we provide Home Visitors with introductory training to work with refugees and a course on the settlement process, as well as, among other topics, information regarding available community supports. (Please see *Appendix 2: HIPPY Canada Professional Development Training.*)

## Section 2: Delivering the HIPPY Program to Newly Arrived Refugee Families

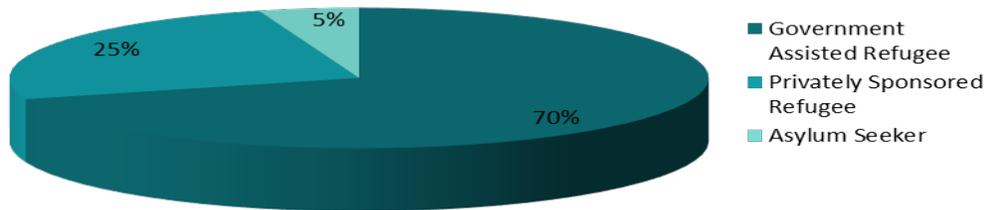
### Case Study

*They kept asking about work. They want to work, especially the lady who is a single mom with four kids and doesn't have any other support. Her child has eye cancer and they took out one of her eyes and the mom is not feeling well. She said, I just need work to support my family, to make a good life for my kids. She has 4 kids whose ages range from 4 to 12 years old. Another mother I work with has thyroid cancer and she has 3 boys. Her health is not that good. She has been asking for the sewing program. I have a third family that has 3 boys from 4 to 9 years old. She is very smart; she is trying to gain as much as she can from the HIPPY Program. She writes down the sounds of letters when we are role playing the HIPPY activities. She is also interested in the sewing program. Another lady says that she can cook anything and can sell it. However, she does not have any Arabic or English and she has 4 kids. In another family, the mother is in ESL class; she has high blood pressure in her brain. When she gets sick, she can't see anything around her; she can't even stand. She is getting treatment, but she is unwell. Her son also has heart problems, and therefore is different from the other kids. So those are the kind of the moms I work with. They have a lot of pain and sickness in their lives. They are surviving and they are trying to do their best. When I go there, I have a lot of compassion for them; I feel really happy when I see that gradually they are getting better and better and gaining lots of skills. I showed them how to register their kids in after-school activities like sports, art, and physical education and they loved it!*

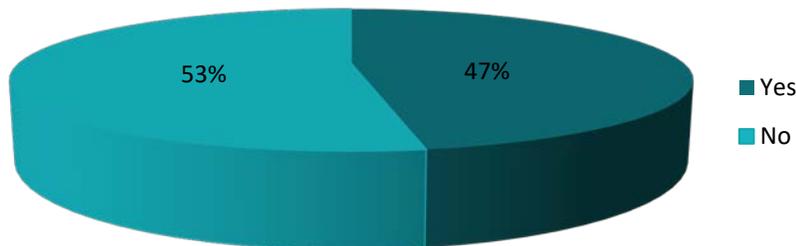
## WHO ARE THE HIPPY PROGRAM REFUGEE FAMILIES?

The refugee experience is not homogeneous. 70% of the refugee families were government-sponsored and 20% were privately sponsored. (See *Figure 1* below.) Some arrived in Canada after long periods in refugee camps and others came directly from their countries of origin. (47% of the refugee families reported that they had lived in a refugee camp – *Figure 2*). In some cases, the family size is large and, in others, small. English and French language proficiency varies significantly as does first-language literacy. Some are asylum seekers, some government-assisted refugees, and some privately funded. All these factors influence the settlement process.

*Figure 1: Type of Refugee*



*Figure 2: Family stayed in refugee camp before coming to Canada*



## Challenges of Starting Anew

Regardless of the conditions refugee families left behind, all confronted challenges settling in their new life in Canada.

We have categorized these findings under the following themes:

1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
2. Difficulty Meeting Basic Needs
3. Prolonged Periods of Time in a Refugee Camp
4. Inadequate Housing
5. Limited Understanding and Connecting to the Canadian Social System
6. Low First-Language Literacy Levels
7. Low Competency in English or French
8. Social Isolation
9. Siblings Not Prepared for Success in School
10. Insufficient French / English Classes
11. Lack of Income Stability

Each is discussed more fully in the section below.

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

HIPPY Home Visitors are neither settlement workers, psychologists, nor professional counselors. We therefore discourage them from diagnosing and, more important, treating, the symptoms of post-traumatic stress, so there is a degree of caution in talking about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Still, a few made the following observations.

*Children who are newcomers, coming from a war zone, are scared and start crying if they hear loud voices or when a bell rings. To know how to deal with this will help the mom.*

Another commented that some of the families had difficulty trusting people around them:

*They looked scared; they looked like they did not feel safe. Some mothers had difficulty focusing and being present. One mother is very distracted; you cannot catch or grab her attention for long. I have to do something to catch her attention again and again, so that she follows what I say.*

## Difficulty Meeting Basic Needs

In general, Home Visitors observed shortages and were called on to support families to meet basic needs such as access to food banks, medical assistance, and, specifically, Halal food. The need for diapers came up frequently. Some helped families with acquiring furniture and a range of items needed in daily life. As one Home Visitor explained:

*They had a lot of needs and expectations and they were running out of money.*

Another commented:

*I also went with them to register at the Pregnancy Centre and the Food Bank. Sometimes mothers asked for places like Value Village, the grocery store, but the most needed items are diapers, because they have a lot of children and the diapers are very expensive, so they always ask for free diapers.*

Many families required support connecting to the schools. Language was the largest barrier and, even in cases where Arabic-speaking Home Visitors were available, it was difficult to make the initial connection.

Many families required connections to family doctors, counseling services, and child health and development services. A Home Visitor explained:

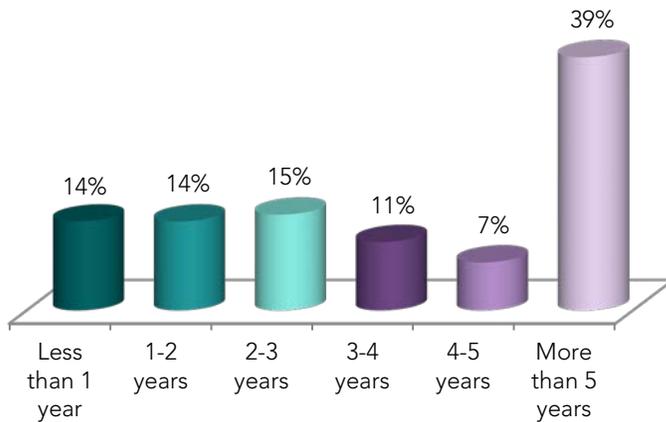
*They have lots of needs and I end up spending about two hours with this family and I do a lot for them as they have very low English. I helped book a doctor's appointment, helped them find doctors in the community and she specifically asked for a female doctor.*

Families consistently requested help with various kinds of document management. They were inundated with letters they could not read and forms that to fill out to obtain various vital supports. Home Visitors were frequently asked for help in translating and completing forms.

## Prolonged Periods of Time in a Refugee Camp

At least 57% of families reported that they had spent five years or more in a refugee camp. (Please see *Figure 3* below). The table gives us a clear picture of the families we are working with. Spending years in a refugee camp requires resilience and strength. The research demonstrates these qualities in the eagerness of these families to embrace their lives here and seeking better outcomes for themselves and their children.

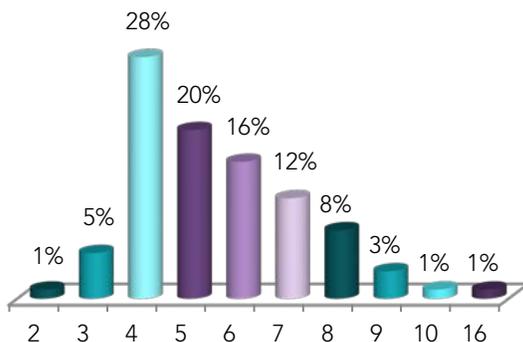
*Figure 3: How long did family stay in refugee camp?*



## Inadequate Housing

Given the short notice to settlement agencies of large numbers of refugees arriving in Canada, agencies were hard-pressed to find adequate housing, both in condition and size. In the case of large families, several people were often living in a single room. Even when affordable accommodations were secured, the larger units had only three or four bedrooms, insufficient for some large families left in crowded quarters. As seen in *Figure 4* below, 28% of families we worked with had four members, 20% had five, and another 28% had 6-7.

*Figure 4: Household size*



In some of the larger centres, bedbugs and cockroaches presented a significant problem for many families who explained that, even when they made efforts to get the bedbug situation under control, their children brought them back home when they returned from going out to play. One Home Visitor commented:

*I think they felt disappointed because she said that, before coming to Canada, they had the picture of Canada in which they will enjoy themselves and have a house. However, when they got to the apartment, it was not the right fit for the size of their family and it was crowded, there were bedbugs (a serious health issues) and they were in shock. Really in shock. One of the women told me she didn't want to be put in an immigrant hotel or house. She said that they wanted a clean house, a clean apartment, that didn't have bedbugs.*

The bedbug situation also complicates the home visiting process. In one case, the Home Visitor explained:

*I took the bedbugs from her home and they ended up in my home. I had a big issue. I tried to meet her outside of her home, but she was not able to meet because she had young kids and her husband has health issues.*

In one city, the Home Visitors developed a visiting protocol to prevent the transmission of bedbugs.

In the smaller cities, housing was less difficult to secure and more affordable. Home Visitors in the larger centres reported that the housing situation eventually settled down when families secured larger and longer-term homes. At the same time, instability in housing clearly hampered the settlement experience. A Home Visitor described her experience with one family:

*At the beginning they were fine, but at some point the landlord wanted to use the space, and that's when their problems began. So every time I went there, they were talking about this problem, asking if maybe we can find her a house, and so on. Finally, she found a home and now she is happy. When I go to her home now, we can work on the HIPPY program.*

The following is a poignant illustration of the depth of despair experienced by one refugee family:

*If you ask me about a big issue facing refugee families, I would say it is housing. I have a family that has 8 members and they live in a 2-bedroom basement suite. Whenever I go to visit her she starts crying and I have to spend some time with her to calm her down and to talk about this issue. She has asked me many times to please tell my manager about her problem. I tried to connect her to a settlement worker but it did not work. I even asked other settlement workers to help her, and one of them said "I am a mad settlement worker; I have 13 clients and I can't deal with all of these clients." Some of them call me and they want to go to a doctor; they don't know the language and therefore have a language barrier. They are still struggling with 2 bedrooms. It is hard for them and the basement is hard for them. Some of them cry because of the bedbugs.*

### **Limited Understanding and Connecting to the Canadian Social System**

Canadian communities are replete with a wide variety of settlement services including recreation programs, libraries, employment services, health services, and others. The Home Visitors have discovered that, even though these supports exist in their communities, refugees tend to experience barriers in accessing them. The most obvious of these are simply ignorance about available services, where to register for them, and how to apply for any subsidies. Home Visitors have observed:

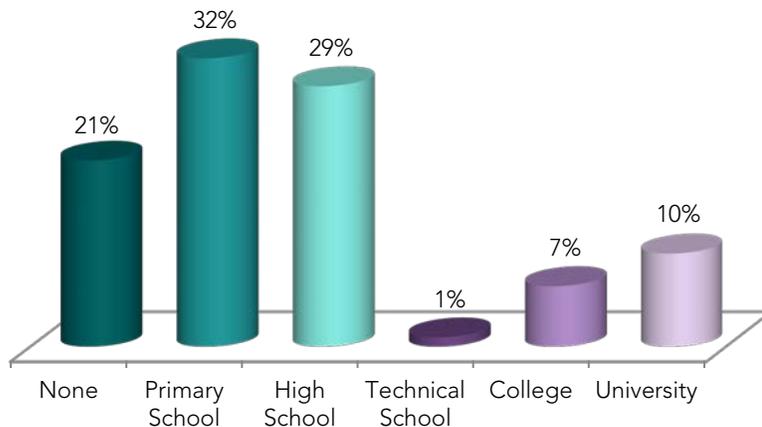
*With some of them, because of the language barrier, even after a few months they still need somebody to support them and show them where the services are or go with them for interpretation.*

And another commented:

*They still need some kind of support, to get them outside, to get to family activities and to use community services.*

## Low First-Language Literacy Levels

Figure 5: HIPPY Parent Education



In some cases, the mothers have low first-language literacy. *Figure 5*, above, shows that at least 21% of the families have no formal education and 32% have completed only primary education. In these instances, the efforts of translating written instructions from English to Arabic provides only limited assistance. One Home Visitor explained:

*Some members of the families were raised in refugee camps for 5-6 years and did not have access to great schooling, and therefore their literacy levels are really, really low. They haven't gone to school in their own country and therefore their English is non-existent.*

One Home Visitor indicated that she had six out of ten families with low first-language literacy. Low literacy levels complicate the delivery of the HIPPY program and, more generally, frustrate language learning and settlement. A Home Visitor provided this example:

*There are individual differences among the moms. Some of the moms really need time, not just to translate the curriculum, but also some of them don't have basic knowledge in their native language, Arabic. So, if a mom doesn't know the alphabet in Arabic, it is so hard; she doesn't know the concept in Arabic. So it's hard for me to translate into English because she doesn't understand. I have to make sure she understands it in her native language first and then translate from English to Arabic. This takes a lot of time, but some of the clients do well, really well.*

## Low Competency in English or French

Low English and French language skill is a challenge for most refugee families in the HIPPY program and, from the Home Visitors' perspectives, presents the biggest challenge for families arriving in Canada. As shown in *Figure 6*, below, 65% of the families have none or low English or French language skills and therefore require translation of letters, help making appointments,

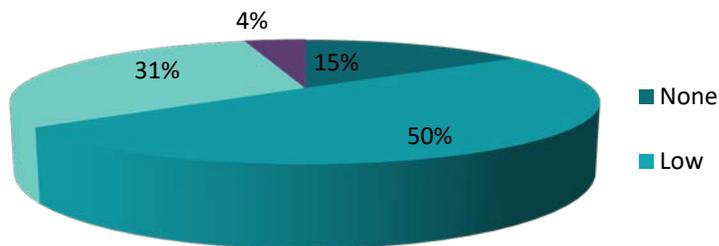
and participation in meetings. Families in the program also required significant translation of the HIPPY program parent-child curriculum and many of the Home Visitors were spending well over the allotted hour per visit. But it appears that the families were eager to learn.

One Home Visitor described the exasperation felt:

*Low English language makes it tricky and it is overwhelming for them and they feel defeated before we even started; that is hard.*

Nevertheless, another remarked:

*They are very interested in learning English. They are really motivated to learn English and they try to speak English.*



## Social Isolation

The HIPPY program intentionally reaches out to isolated and, therefore, vulnerable families.

Through referrals, visiting food banks, and door-knocking, we seek families currently not engaged in other programs and services. Although there are many services available to refugee families, the Home Visitors explained that there are many factors leading to ongoing isolation of families – especially mothers. Among these are typically a combination of: limited French and English skills; fear stemming from not understanding how society works; limited knowledge of transportation routes; too many children at home to coordinate transportation; poverty; and cultural practices that often mean women are housebound.

Home Visitors have reported that these factors often contribute to the mother lagging behind the rest of the family in the settlement process. One Home Visitor described a family in the program:

*I have been visiting the families for 7 months, and I have seen a reduction in isolation because they see somebody different [the Home Visitor herself] in their house; they speak their language so they feel a little bit better.*

Another Home Visitor explained:

*Yes, definitely there is a lot of support for many families but because I am there in the home every week, they have mail, bills, and documents ready for me to look at. This is usual for us as HIPPY Home Visitors. They do have other support systems like through the settlement worker in school. They have been connected but they still feel isolated.*

### **Siblings Not Prepared for Success in School**

While the HIPPY program focuses on preparing pre-school children for school, the HIPPY Home Visitors were pulled into some difficult situations when older siblings were not prepared for school in Canada. One Home Visitor described her process of linking a mother with the Canadian school system:

*At the beginning, they told me they were struggling going to school. Some of them don't know the language, can't interact with other kids, and came back home crying and in shock. Most of the parents did not have the confidence to go to the school and talk to the teacher. At one time, one of them asked me to go with her to the school as her son was struggling and she didn't know how to explain the situation to the teacher so that she would understand. All schools should have support workers. Some do have Arabic-speaking ones. So, I tried to link her to someone and reached out to one of the support workers. She was unfortunately working with some other schools, but she did not work with the school of my client's son. She linked my client with another support worker who spoke Arabic, but it took time to reach her. In the end, I successfully linked her with this support worker. And she went there and whenever she needs something that is related to her son at school, she calls that support worker and she has helped her a lot.*

### **Insufficient French / English Classes**

Home Visitors also reported that there were insufficient spaces for English and French classes for all members of the family. Children learned French and English at school, while parents waited for spaces to open up. Although most Syrian refugees were enrolled in language training, we discovered that many relied on the HIPPY program as their English or French language-learning program. This affected service delivery as Home Visitors spent more time explaining and translating, which resulted in Home Visitors seeing a reduced number of families and / or working more than their allotted hours.

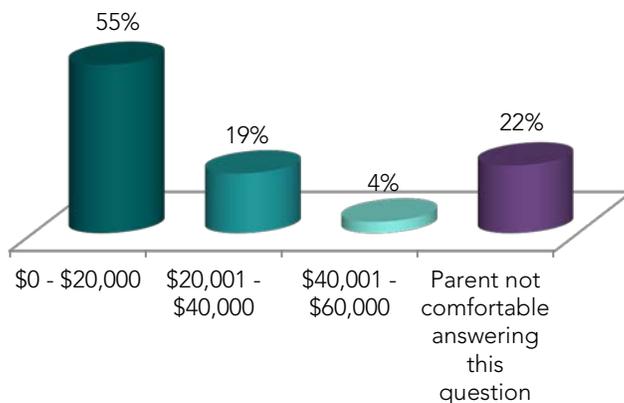
## Lack of Income Stability

We recognize that it may not be realistic for low literacy mothers with several children to seek employment in the first year in Canada. As discussed in this report there are many basic needs that first need to be addressed. Still, some families discussed with their Home Visitor the need to stabilize their income. In many instances, the HIPPY host site had several employment programs available for their clients, and Home Visitors regularly made referrals. One Home Visitor described the urgency to address income stability before the hope in the family fades:

*We need to make sure not to let the hope fade inside them. I have 4 families that are asking for the sewing program, in which they can practice their English. I am hoping we can create a program to teach them how to sew and offer English lessons at the same time. Doing sewing while learning English, means they can sew and learn, sew and work. This will support the community and it will support the family by adding to their income; it will benefit the country in terms of taxes.*

As below in *Figure 7*, most families are low-income; 55% report incomes of less than \$20,000. Only 20% report incomes of \$20,000 to \$40,000 and, because 22% of families felt uncomfortable responding to these questions, the numbers in the first two low-income categories might actually be higher than shown.

*Figure 7: Gross Annual Family Income*



## Section 3: HIPPY Program Adjustments

### Case Study

*I have been working with the family for 3 years. At the beginning, I used to drive them, because I knew they could not do it and they didn't know the city. I would help them register for different things that they needed at different agencies. After a while, I told them that they should be able to get to these places on their own. I explained to the agencies that, every month when they come, they should just give them what they need as they don't speak English, and they said okay. If there were any problems, the agencies would call me. The moms ask me to take them almost everywhere, I said OK at first, as they were new, but frankly I told the mom that I couldn't do it every time, and that they should learn how to go by themselves. They are now happy because they know how to get there by themselves. Also, if they wanted to go on the bus, we would give them tickets, and that way they would be encouraged to go by themselves; this was good, because they were not dependent on me. Now they have started exploring the city, they tell people "good morning" and they say good morning back. They have built relationships with the agencies.*

## MAKING THE PROGRAM FIT

While the HIPPY program has worked with refugee families over the last several years, particularly with the Karen community in Toronto, there was a significant increase in refugee work in the 2016-17 program year. As described above, Home Visitors met significant challenges in their work with newly arrived refugees. Many adjustments were made on the fly and included the addition of services beyond the typical HIPPY program. It is our intention to identify and systematize the most effective of these adjustments so that Home Visitors are better prepared in the 2017-18 program year.

As noted, not all newly arrived refugee families were in the same situation. The more layers of challenges the families were confronting, the more complex the delivery of the HIPPY program became.

Generally, Home Visitors indicated that, while the demand for supports was overwhelming during the first one or two months and caused home visits to run over the typical one hour, the time required decreased as the families became more settled (i.e. in stable housing, getting medical attention, children enrolled in school etc.). Attention then shifted to the HIPPY program.

Findings regarding program adjustments are discussed below.

### **Overcoming language barriers for role-playing the parent child curriculum**

By far the largest and most frequent accommodation was developing a strategy for communicating an English or French curriculum in Arabic. HIPPY Home Visitors were remarkably resourceful in developing innovative strategies to facilitate basic understanding of the parent-child curriculum while ensuring that mothers remained motivated to participate in the program despite seemingly insurmountable language barriers. In cases when the mother did not have first-language literacy, the dynamic became more complex. A few trends are worth noting. Almost without exception, the Home Visitors reported that, as the mother progressed through the weeks, the need for translation decreased. Mothers were learning English and French, at least key concepts and words, through the HIPPY program.

Mothers who were engaged in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs required less translation support over time.

Most Home Visitors observed that mothers were keen to speak English:

*They are very interested in learning English. They are really motivated to learn English and they try to speak English. Sometimes they use what I teach them and when they are outside and understand what other people say, they are very happy.*

While a focus remains on delivering the program in English and French, specific program delivery strategies for role-playing the parent child curriculum with non-English and -French speaking parents included:

### **1) *Translation of the curriculum into Arabic***

Arabic-speaking Home Visitors took on the responsibility of translating the curriculum in whole or in part into Arabic.

*I mostly have to translate and explain the curriculum in Arabic and it is not easy, especially with the songs, rhymes, and alphabets. I have to translate some words so that they understand and get the point of the activities.*

### **2) *Physical acting-out of the curriculum***

In some cases, the Home Visitors acted out activities to help mothers more easily remember when they role-play with their families. The Home Visitor describes the role play:

*I act for them so that they can understand. But they like and love the program because they say that they're learning step by step. But it takes a very long time.*

Another Home Visitor describes a touching example of a spouse who supported his wife's involvement in the program:

*...her husband called me at the beginning and said "Please communicate with my wife. She has almost no English but if you use signs, like with your hands and use body language and show her pictures she will understand," and that was exactly true. This was with the age 3 program; honestly, if it were the age 4 program I would have had to modify it, but because it was age 3, I used a ton of body language and we used our hands so much at first. She passed level 0 and she is now in level 1 and her language has tremendously gotten better.*

### **3) *Identifying similar Arabic stories***

One Home Visitor invited families to switch out the HIPPY program rhymes and stories with similar Arabic children's rhymes.

### **4) *Developing picture-reading techniques***

The HIPPY program introduces a new picture or storybook to the family every third week (books every 4-6 weeks). While the books are at a pre-school level, they may incorporate more words as the program progresses to the curriculum for age-five children. For mothers who struggled

with the reading, Home Visitors taught parents how to develop a picture-reading approach. The Home Visitors read the programs in Arabic with follow-up readings to help the parent read and remember the story through the pictures. In the words of one Home Visitor:

*I try to read the book with them, help them understand it, and just encourage them to look at the pictures. Then, in turn, I say that they should show those pictures to the child and ask them what they see or just ask the child to tell them the story depending on what they see in the pictures.*

#### **5) *Delivering the program in English and following with an Arabic explanation***

Other Home Visitors were committed to having the family learn English and provided the curriculum as much as possible in English.

*No, I do it in English so they can get it. The family has a 3- and a 4-year old. I do it in English first so they get the concept in English and then I translate it into Arabic and it takes a lot of time. I just do all the role play in English and then I go over it in Arabic.*

#### **6) *Blending English and Arabic with phonetic spelling***

One Home Visitor developed an innovative strategy for helping Mothers learn key HIPPY concepts by using the phonetic spelling of English words with Arabic letters.

*First, I translated the activities a little bit so that they could understand the concept being taught. After that I gave them the key words in English but wrote for them in Arabic letters, because they don't know how to spell in English; that way they do not forget the word. For example, I wrote JUMP in Arabic and then they start saying JUMP, JUMP. She can also say this to her child. The mother has also learned some words for the parts of the body, like eye, belly, or throat (if she has a sore throat) ... some practical words that she can use everywhere.*

#### **7) *Trouble shooting vocabulary in advance of the home visit***

Another Home Visitor found that reviewing the curriculum and finding and translating the most difficult words in advance of the home visits helped to increase parents' comprehension of the materials.

#### **8) *Including older siblings in role-play***

The same Home Visitor described another strategy for helping families understand the English curriculum: to engage the entire family in acting out the role-play.

*I found it so helpful when everybody was into it. Even the kids who were not in school and the older ones were into the program; they jump and they play the games. All the family members participate, because all the family needs English, so I do it in English.*

Another Home Visitor explained that older siblings who were already at school and who had quickly grasped English or French were helpful in supporting their mothers doing the HIPPY curriculum with younger siblings.

### **9) *Using translation tools***

In some instances, when the Home Visitor did not speak Arabic, they were required to develop even more innovative strategies, relying on the use of symbols and the translation of key words with Google translate.

Despite these efforts, some families still found it difficult. If they were doing the program from memory they could not remember what they were supposed to do by the time they got around to doing the program with their children. This type of situation caused frustration and demotivated the mother. A Home Visitor explained:

*Most of the families that I have currently come from the countryside. They don't have a lot of formal education and therefore it is not easy for them to have all of this information in English. When I do the home visit, they do their best to absorb all of this information such that they can deliver it to their kids. They do forget some things. The mother says she enjoys the lessons with the Home Visitor, but when the Home Visitor leaves, she has to cook for her kids and do other things. When she later delivers the HIPPY curriculum to her child, she does not remember everything at times. The mother says if it is written in Arabic she can read and do the activities.*

### **Accommodating Children's Educational Delays**

Because of a variety of factors, some children enrolled in the program were not prepared to participate in a curriculum at the level based on the widely held expectations of Canadian school systems. Home visits started some age-five children with the age-three curriculum and, in some cases, school-aged children with the age-five curriculum. In one case, the Home Visitor claimed:

*The older children use it (the HIPPY curriculum), because it's the same curriculum as in school, and now the mom has the information about what her child is learning at school.*

## Coaching Parents to Participate in Play-based Activities

The HIPPY program requires that parents fully engage with their children in play-based activities. For many moms, playing soccer with a newspaper ball and jumping like a frog was new and uncomfortable and some Home Visitors met with resistance. Home Visitors worked slowly with the families and were careful to explain the educational purpose behind each activity. This is how one Home Visitor resolved the situation:

*For the first home visit, I tried to go through the activities; for example, rolling the ball jumping, or doing some other activity, for them, was just something that the child does. They were resistant to participating in the rolling and hopping, but when I explained to them that, by doing this with your child, you are gaining more than the physical benefit; it is more for the attachment / bond with your child. I tried to explain the skill box and what the point of the activity was, saying that it was not just playing, jumping, and hopping; it was about the relationship that they create with their children. Now they do that.*

## Using the HIPPY Program as English and French Language Learning Program

Newcomer parents enjoy a value-added feature of the program, learning French and English using the curriculum one hour per week and then again with their child 15 minutes a day. The refugee parents that participated in the 2016-17 program were the same. Home Visitors reported that some Mothers were enrolled in ESL and other language learning programs. In several interviews, the Home Visitors described the mother's desire to learn English and their insistence on role-playing the parent-child curriculum in English:

*Some of the moms, the ones that have little English, prefer me to read the curriculum in English because they want to learn the language. They want to learn from me; some of them told me, "We are learning from you better than ESL." They say "I go to ESL, but I feel I am learning from you better, learning a lot of vocabulary that is easy to use with my kids and outside of my home." They are really happy with that.*

In several cases, the Home Visitors reported that the English language they were learning through the HIPPY program was supporting them in other settings:

*The mom still wants English words because she wants to practice. Actually the whole family wants to practice. Just the other day I was visiting their home and the child development service person happened to come in when I was finishing. We started talking about the pamphlet that the child development service lady had brought, and the mother said, "I want them both in English and Arabic."*

In some instances, it was the Home Visitor who drove the agenda for mothers to stick to and learn English. They believed that, by learning English, their settlement process would be expedited:

*Yes, they will be happy if they find it in Arabic but I just want them to learn English so that they don't get dependent on Arabic, as they already know Arabic. I just like them to learn English. I know that it is hard at the beginning but they will get used to it. If they need a translation, I am always there for them and I can explain everything in Arabic for them.*

In another case, the entire family took in the role-play exercise and used it as a modified English-language learning group:

*This was an extended family, in which the children's aunt lived with them. The aunt also wanted to learn English, and therefore, the mother, the aunt and the children all sat in the home visit to learn together. The aunt would actually be the one to do all the program activities with the children and with the mom so that she could practice her English. In my situation, the families asked to have an English Home Visitor to practice their English.*

### **Managing the Debate on the First language in Mother-Child Interaction**

There is an ongoing debate in early learning circles, including HIPPIY International, as to whether HIPPIY should be delivered in the first language or, as some say, “the language of the heart.” The argument is tied to bonding and attachment. Simply put, it is easier to connect with one's child when the parent can speak fluently. The HIPPIY Program recognizes and honours that it is important families to communicate with their children in their natural setting.

This perspective was shared by one HIPPIY Home Visitor:

*I have some families in which they are also teaching their kids Arabic; they say it is very important and that they will be much better in English if they know their own language too. So they are more confident that they are doing the right things for their kids; they are getting confident in teaching their kids because they didn't know that this was the same way that they have to continue to teach their kids. They learn how to deal with their kids much better; they know that, as much as they explain things for their kids, talking with them forms bonds and they will get better and better.*

### **Setting Boundaries as Part of the Home Visitor's Regular Practice**

The expectations placed on the Home Visitors by newly arrived refugees went well beyond their typical responsibilities. One Home Visitor explained:

*We are the only people they see every week, so they expect to get answers for all their questions.*

In the case of newly arrived refugees, there were three reasons why setting boundaries became critical.

Most sites had received funding for one-hour weekly home visits. The exception was at the Immigrants Services Society (ISS), in the *At Home in Canada* program, where 1.5 hours per week were allocated in anticipation of the increased needs of refugees. Additional demands sometimes added a full 30 minutes to each home visit. Within the current contractual relationships, setting the one-hour time limit ensured sites met budgetary restraints. However, the Home Visitors had less flexibility to meet the demands of the family.

Boundaries were also required for personal reasons. Sometimes the familial circumstances of refugee families were sad, even tragic. Home Visitors needed to develop strategies to protect their own families and themselves carrying home the difficult circumstances faced during the home visit. Professional self-care became especially important to protect Home Visitors from burn-out.

And, finally, Home Visitors are only one part of an elaborate system of settlement services. They simply do not have the training to meet the most complex needs of newly arrived refugees. They were encouraged to develop boundaries by referring families to suitable services and helping them follow through with the new service resource.

As part of our Home Visitor professional education program, HIPPY Canada supports the Coordinators at each site to work with Home Visitors on establishing professional boundaries. Most of the host organizations also offer training in setting appropriate boundaries.

One Home Visitor described her approach to setting boundaries from the start:

*They know that I am at their home to deliver the HIPPY program. I have to explain to them the expectations of the HIPPY program, so they know that I am there for HIPPY first and then, after I finish my home visit, they can ask all their questions. This has been happening for the whole 3 years with HIPPY and I know what it looks like, so I explain to them at the beginning that, if you have questions let's do it after the HIPPY program, so they respect that and they are OK with it.*

Other sites gave their Home Visitors more latitude to meet the needs of families as they arose:

*I am not driving now, and therefore cannot take families to where they need to go. I refer them to other settlement workers within our organization and if I can, I do my best, regardless of what I have to do at work within the HIPPY program.*

For Home Visitors, drawing the line was not easy. They empathized with the overwhelming nature of navigating complex systems of health, housing, social services, and education. Balance and boundaries were difficult to establish:

*Some ask questions about pregnancy tests, and, at the time, why they are not pregnant (as they are trying). At times it is hard to set the boundaries, but in a sense your heart just breaks because these are simple responses, for instance, like going to Shoppers Drug Mart with them to get a pregnancy test kit. You can't say, no I am not going to answer that question and it is not part of my job, because, by the time I refer the poor family to the doctor, it's a month from now, and she wants to know where to buy a pregnancy test kit now. It is like you need to help these families because the process to refer them is long and at times, to have every single question answered, they would be at 10 different service providers.*

One Home Visitor talked about a refugee family she worked with over three years and eventually found a compromise in meeting the mother's needs while both encouraging her independence and setting boundaries. While some may think that this initial support surpassed the normal expectations of the Home Visitor, the result was a mother who was able to manage the demands of day-to-day life.

In other cases, Home Visitors took a very firm position on offering the family support beyond the delivery of the HIPPY program. This approach was reflective of the HIPPY host site's policy and not a HIPPY position:

*Because I know how this works culturally, I made it clear that my time is limited; "Let's do HIPPY and then ask questions when we are done." When we finish HIPPY, I tell her, I have kids to pick up and it is Friday afternoon and the kids are waiting. I know culturally this is what is going to happen but I put my boundary right at the beginning.*

### **Facilitating a Referral Process to Other Services and Agencies**

It is not uncommon for a Home Visitor to be regarded as a lifeline to the outside world, particularly for highly isolated families who do not speak French or English. The needs and issues confronting newly arrived refugees are always complex and often require multiple service providers. One Home Visitor described her experience:

*They ask me about, for example, health services, to connect them with someone, like a doctor who speaks Arabic, and they ask me about education services, about ESL. Some of them ask me about employment and how they can work, how they can start, and if our agency provides the program or training that can help them.*

A core module in the HIPPY Home Visitor training is community asset-mapping. Home Visitors start learning in pre-service training about the options of services to connect families in their

communities. In addition to the menu of services provided by the HIPPY host organization, HIPPY Home Visitors are introduced to other services available in their communities. Filling out this knowledge, in weekly or biweekly individual meetings with the Home Visitor, as well as the weekly group Home Visitor training sessions, the HIPPY Coordinator provides Home Visitors advice and contacts for additional services. In some cases, when the needs surpass the knowledge and experience of the Home Visitor, the Coordinator will step in. One Home Visitor described how she worked together with her Coordinator:

*Some of them have settlement workers, and some don't. I try to help them with their needs. I ask the HIPPY Coordinator about the things they are looking for and the programs they need. She helps me to find the places I can refer them to. So I am trying to refer them and show them what is around them.*

Some Home Visitors are very committed to ensure that families have knowledge and ability to connect to the services that will improve their quality of life in Canada. They encourage families to experience the fullness of Canadian community life:

*Frankly, they have the opportunity to benefit from other programs that provide them with a lot of things; for example, what I have heard from them, is that there is one physician for all these families, they know where to go, they have a translator when visiting the physician and can speak their own language, for example, at the physician's office or at school. Lately there is a settlement worker at school and they can speak their language, so it becomes a lot easier for them. What I do right now is that I encourage them to do some activities with their kids, instead of staying at home, being isolated. I suggest they should go to the library, take some skating lessons for their kids, go swimming, go visit a museum when it is free, for example on Thursdays. These kinds of activities can contribute to the family's establishment here or to their enjoyment of being in Canada. Also, I encourage them to do some English conversation classes in the local library.*

## Section 4: HIPPY Program Impact

### Case study

*At the beginning, some families were not very open to having someone in their house and they were somehow scared; they looked like they were not safe. When I talked to them and told them about the program and the benefits they were going to get from it, they started to have a better understanding of the program. In the first few sessions, I saw their need for housing. They were exactly like a desert; as much as you pour water on it, it will be absorbed. So as much as I was giving them information they were absorbing it and asking for more. They really wanted to know what was going on around them and what they could get, and how to live a better life than what they had before.*

## DID THE HIPPY PROGRAM WORK?

The following examines the outcomes realized from the HIPPY home visiting program intervention in regard to the HIPPY Home Visitors' increased capacity to meet the needs of newly arrived refugee families, and, in turn, the families' journey toward settlement and success in the HIPPY program. As mentioned above, we have captured the data from two sources: a qualitative analysis derived from the interviews with the HIPPY Home Visitors; and quantitative data collected from our Performance Management System.

A few preliminary comments will help frame our discussion of the findings. While settlement services provide comprehensive and sensitive programs, the majority are centre-based. HIPPY Home Visitors are on the front line. For many families, after they were settled in a home, the HIPPY Home Visitor became their primary connection to the outside world.

The HIPPY program is an effective intervention for meeting the complex and diverse needs of refugees. The number and extent of program adjustments required varied from site to site but the program model was an effective outreach tool.

Before discussing outcomes, it is important to note that many Home Visitors reported that families simply enjoyed the program. This is where change begins. The Home Visitors talked about how the families looked forward to their weekly visit and waited for them to arrive. Some families regarded the program as a "gift" and this motivated them to work hard. Other Home Visitors reported that mothers felt happier, as they took pleasure in working with their children. One Home Visitor explains:

*We bring everything with us, all the materials (that are likely not to be found in the home), such that they don't have to look for anything, so that is very helpful.*

Below is a report on the HIPPY Canada outcomes (change) for Home Visitors, Mothers, and Children.

### Home Visitor Change

This section describes the progress of Home Visitors in expanding their ability to support mothers in the program while developing their own employability skills. The information in the Home Visitor Outcomes section is derived from data in the 'Home Visitor Progress Report,' an ongoing monitoring tool used regularly to measure change throughout the program year, and from the research project's qualitative data.

The Home Visitor progress report tool uses a rating scale (indicators of success) for each identified outcome in a progression from low to high and is completed four times during the program year by both the Coordinator (her observations) and the Home Visitor (self-assessment). During one-on-one meetings, the Coordinator and Home Visitor discuss and agree on how the Home Visitor is progressing. The final agreed-upon results are then entered into ETO by the Coordinator. The first

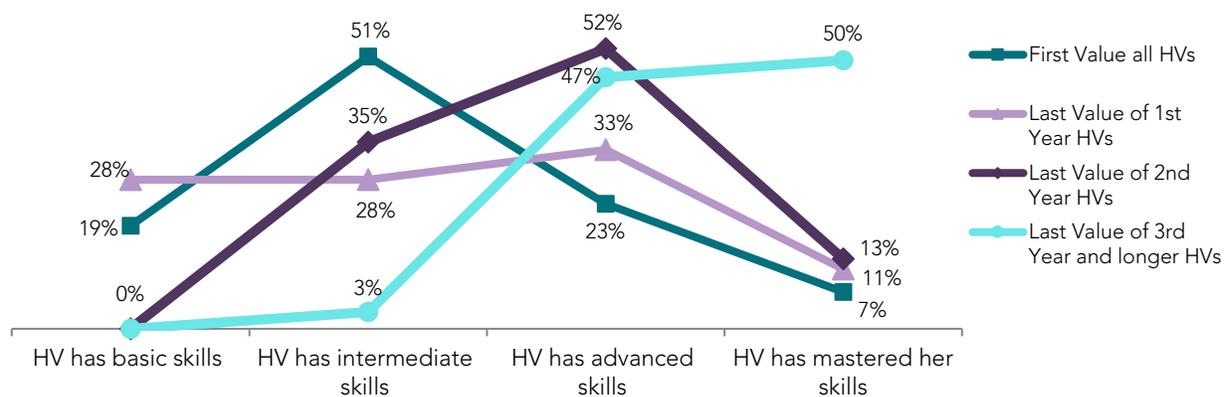
Home Visitor progress report measurement serves as the baseline against which future progress is measured.

## Employment and Training

*Home Visitors have an in-depth knowledge of materials and the skills to develop HIPPY mothers' capacity to support their children's learning.*

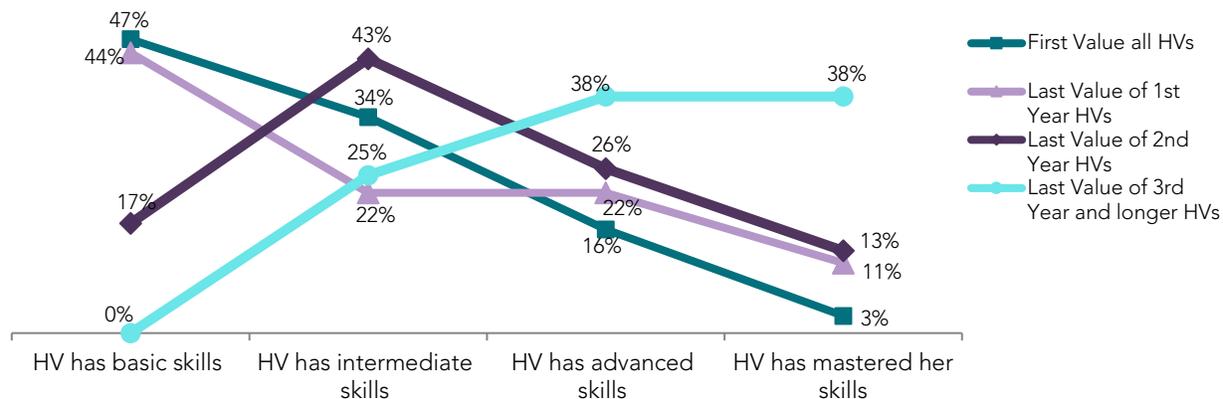
Figure 8, below, clearly shows dramatic increase in professional skills and the ability of Home Visitors to support mothers as teachers of their children through the year. By the end of the program year, 44% of Home Visitors in their first had advanced or mastered their skills to support mothers' ability interact (engage) with her child with the HIPPY curriculum. For Home Visitors in the second and third years, 65% and 97% respectively had advanced or mastered their skills to support mothers' ability to interact (engage) with her child with the HIPPY curriculum.

Figure 8: Ability to support mothers' skills to enable her to interact (engage) with her child within the HIPPY curriculum



These skills also extend to supporting the mothers' engagement in learning activities with their children beyond the HIPPY curriculum. (See Figure 9 below). By the end of the program year, 33% of Home Visitors in their first year had advanced or mastered their skills to support the mothers' engagement in learning activities with their children beyond the HIPPY curriculum. For Home Visitors in the second and thirds years, 39% and 76% respectively had advanced or mastered their skills to support the mothers' engagement in learning activities with their children beyond the HIPPY curriculum.

Figure 9: Ability to support mothers' engagement in learning activities with their children beyond the HIPPY curriculum



The Home Visitors told us that newly arrived refugee parents required reminders and, in some cases, persuasion that they were in fact their child's first and best teacher. During the home visit, Home Visitors emphasized to the mothers that the work that they were doing with their children in the home set them up for success in school and life. They coached parents in establishing a routine of working daily with the children, a habit that will endure well into the school years. One Home Visitor used the following approach:

*I try to tell them to focus on their kids, telling them that, if you want your kids to be smart and be successful in life, to become an important person, you have to teach them all these things so that you can support them in their schooling and in their life. I try to make them realize that the bond between mom and child grows stronger.*

Home Visitors believe that the experience of working with refugees has contributed significantly to their knowledge and skills. Some, who are immigrant women themselves, expressed empathy and a deep understanding of the issues confronting the new refugee family. One Home Visitor remembered:

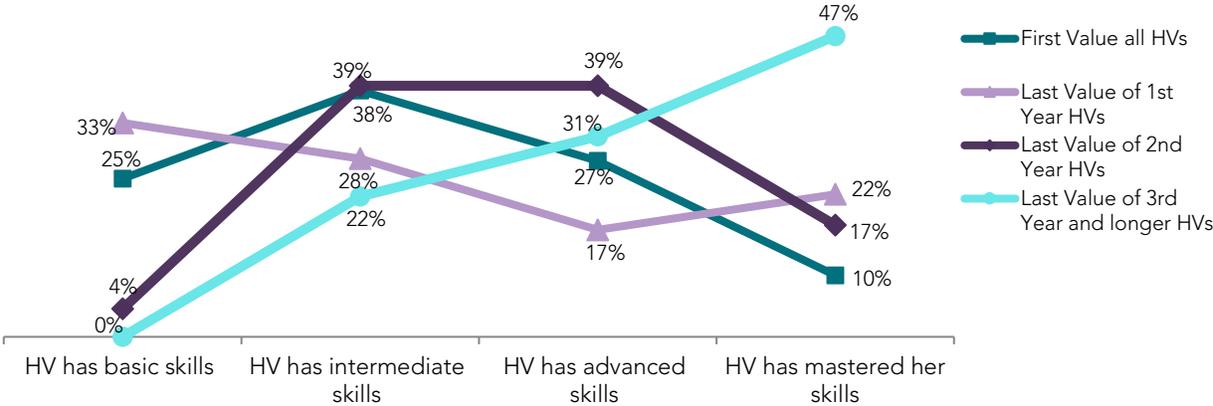
*I remember when I was a newcomer and I needed all these questions to be answered but I didn't have all the sources right.*

This shared empathy, they believe, was their most important credential. Through the development of coping strategies and program adjustments, they became more confident in their ability to meet the needs of families.

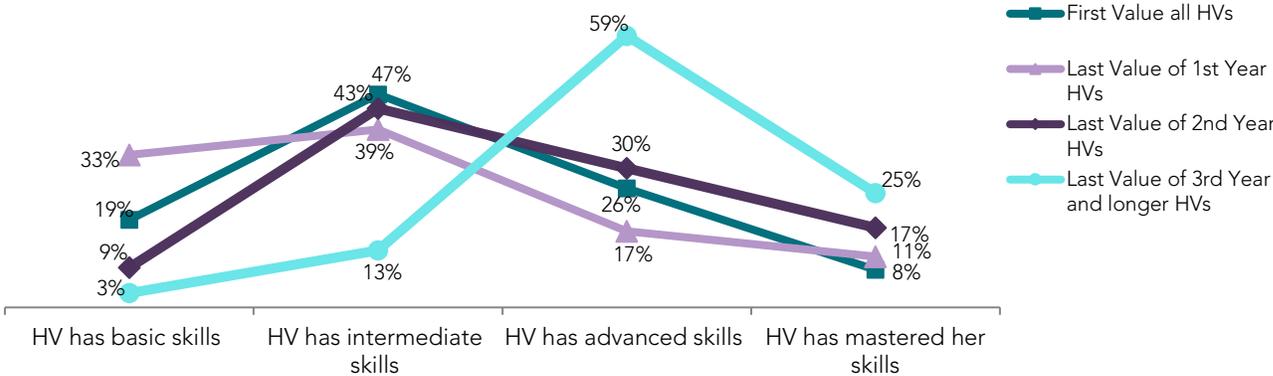
*Home Visitors have the knowledge and skills to support mothers to increase their social inclusion in activities such as HIPPY group events and other community events.*

The Home Visitors indicated that their host organizations and their community partners offered an extensive network of services. *Figure 10* below shows that, by the end of the program year, 39% of Home Visitors in their first year had advanced or mastered their skills to support the mothers' attendance at HIPPY Group Meetings. For Home Visitors in the second and third years, 56% and 78% respectively had advanced or mastered their skills to support the mothers' attendance at HIPPY Group Meetings.

*Figure 10: Ability to reduce barriers and motivate mothers to attend HIPPY group events*



*Figure 11: Ability to reduce barriers and motivate mothers to attend other community events*



*Figure 11* above shows that, by the end of the program year, 28% of Home Visitors in their first year had advanced or mastered their skills to support the mothers' engagement in their local communities and they had facilitated social inclusion. For Home Visitors in the second and third years, 47% and 84% respectively had advanced or mastered their skills to support the mothers' engagement in their local communities and they had facilitated social inclusion.

## Mothers Change

This section describes the data collected through parental baseline and follow-up surveys and the 'Parent Progress Report' approach, like the one applied to Home Visitor measurement.

HIPPY participant change is captured using the mother assessment form, which is completed by the HIPPY mother as a self-assessment. Baseline data are collected retroactively at the end of the first year and follow-up data at the end of each year.

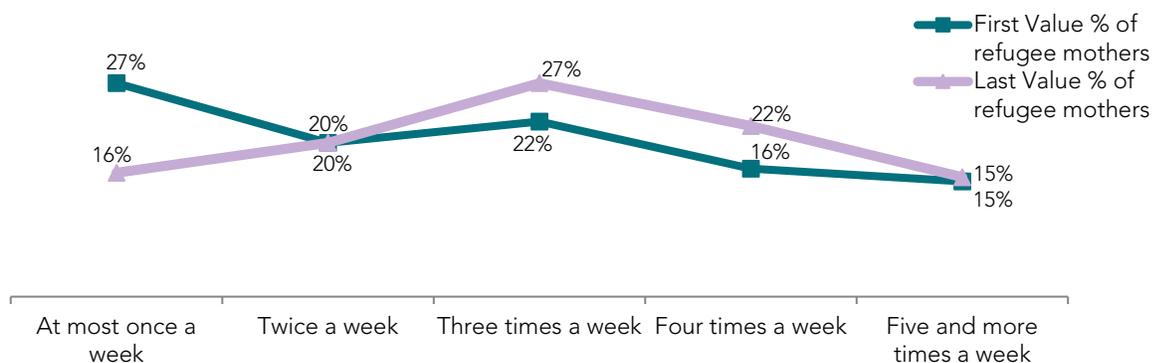
### Mothers' Early Childhood Skills

#### *Mothers establish a routine of engaging with their child on educational (HIPPY) activities.*

Mothers in the program talked about discovering the simple joy in, and consequent increased dedication to, working with their children. *Figure 12* below, shows that there was an increase in the number of mothers who established a routine of engaging with their children three and four times a week from 22% to 27% and 16% to 22% respectively. The number of mothers who engaged with their children once a week decreased from 27% to 16%. Home Visitors observed that mothers worked hard at completing the program each week and took satisfaction in seeing their children change and learn:

*They are now able to sit with the child and set a time for doing the activities. Before joining HIPPY, they did not have all these habits, to sit with the child, set a time, and do the activities; they didn't have it.*

Figure 12: Mother establishes a routine of engaging with her child on educational (HIPPY) activities



Others described a new insight into and a shift in the type activities that children engaged in:

*They are saying that, before, they were not reading to their kids. They were depending on the laptop and iPad and they used to get whatever they wanted from there. Now after seeing the HIPPY program and how we deliver it, they know they have to work with their kids; they found out that it is not the computer or iPad that is a benefit to their kid, it is the time they spend with them. In some families, they started to read with their kids 5 days a week.*

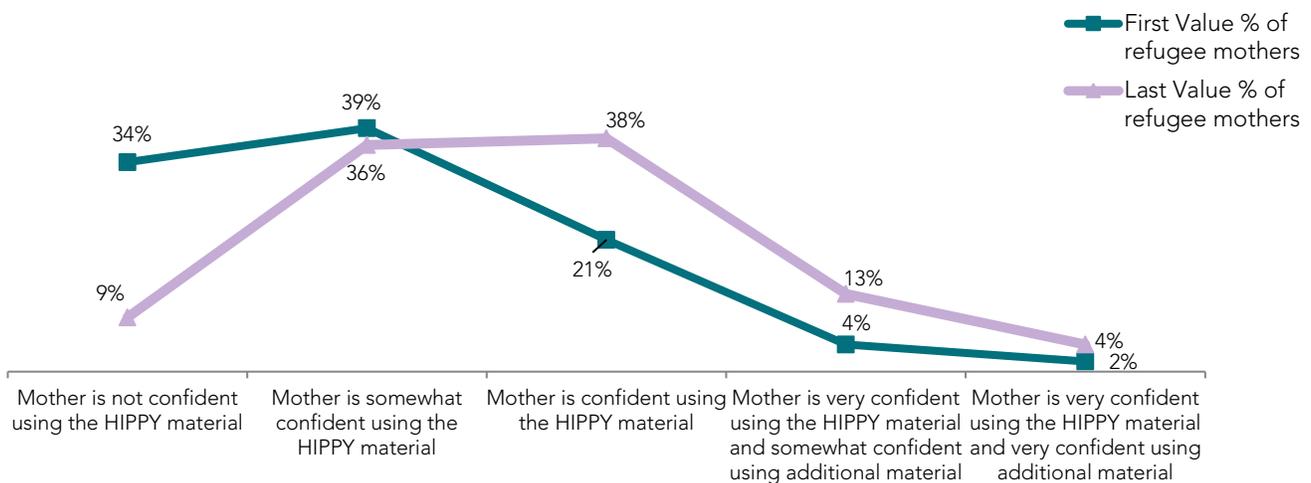
***Mothers have the skills and capacity to use the HIPPY materials to teach their children.***

Many Home Visitors commented on the increased confidence they observed in mothers to work with the HIPPY materials. One commented:

*In the same way that they spoke with me, in the past they were not confident, like when doing the role play with me, but now I can see lots of changes and they are doing the role play with me.*

One Home Visitor observed that the mother’s confidence increased (see Figure 13 below), when she started to understand the importance of education through the program and developed the skills to work with her child. The change, Home Visitors observed, occurred incrementally over each week. By the end of the program year, more than half (51%) of the mothers were confident or very confident in using the HIPPY or other materials to teach their child.

Figure 13: Mother has the skills and capacity to use the HIPPY materials to teach her child



Another Home Visitor was particularly encouraged by the progress of newly arrived refugees when she made a comparison between families who had been in the program for two years vs. newer arrivals:

*With the older families, I can see the progress, I can see it very clearly. Now they have started to know some concepts, many concepts, and sometimes they ask me, "What is this word? How can I use it? What is the meaning of this?" For me, I can see the progress. Even with the new family, and she is here for less than 1 year, I think 6 months, I can see now that she knows the alphabet. It is week 13, but I can see the progress; her daughter is doing very well. This means that she is doing a good job delivering the activity to her child. She has increased confidence. This is the first time I have seen someone so confident; when we ask how confident she is when she teaches her child, she says: "I'm very confident!" So it means that they know what they are doing.*

One Home Visitor aptly noted that building parental confidence was a process that required hard work and determination on the parts of both the Home Visitor and the parent, even when they thought they could no longer continue. The Home Visitor explained:

*I have one story of a mother who, at the beginning of program, was not able to continue the program. Maybe she found it hard or not engaging very much. But over time, I talked to her and engaged her and made the program easier for her; she became fully engaged and now is at the end of the program, and she is very proud that she did not quit the program and continued to get all its benefits.*

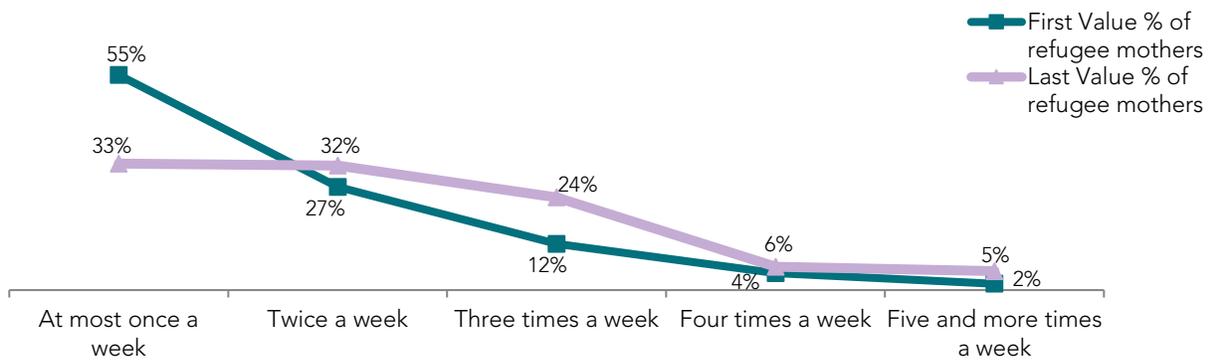
### ***Mothers engage their child with additional learning materials (beyond those from HIPPY).***

Once mothers become comfortable and competent in using the parent-child curriculum, we encourage parents to expand their activities to include everything from going to the library or other play groups to making their at-home environment conducive to learning. *Figure 14* below shows that, by the end of the program year, mothers who engaged with their children on additional learning two or three times a week increased from 27% to 32% and 12% to 24%. Mothers who engaged with their children once a week decreased from 55% to 33%.

The following is an example of how mothers progressed to more autonomous learning approaches:

*Now they understand why they are doing the activity. Sometimes, if they can't do the curriculum, they tell me that they were doing other activities like baking with their children, something they do outside of the HIPPY curriculum. So they understand the importance of spending some quality time with their children doing other games, other plays, other activities, out of HIPPY, but the aim is the same. If they can't read the English, the symbols somehow help, or they use other common games to do with their little ones.*

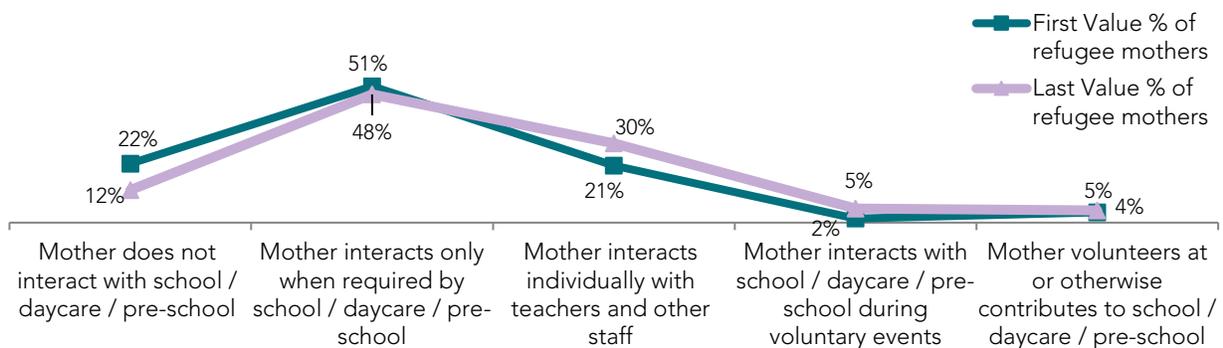
Figure 14: Mother engages her child with additional learning materials (beyond those from HIPPY)



**Mothers have meaningful interactions with their child’s school (for children ages 4 and 5) or daycare, pre-school, etc. (for younger children).**

A core principle of the HIPPY program is to support parents to establish a relationship with their school as their child’s advocate, which tends to last throughout their school career. Language barriers, low literacy, confusion about the education system, and expectations of parents often combine in a lack of parental confidence and significant barriers to parental engagement in the school. As shown in Figure 15 below, by the end of the program year, the number of mothers who interacted with the school on an individual basis increased from 21% to 30%, and at least 5% had started volunteering at their children’s school or daycare. This is significant, given that these mothers started the HIPPY Program in the fall of 2016 and within seven months were engaging with their community and services around them.

Figure 15: Mother has meaningful interactions with her child's school (for age 4 and 5 children) or daycare, pre-school, etc. (for younger children)



With Home Visitor support and the increased parental agency as parents gain confidence in working with their child, combined with structured ideas for school engagement embedded in the HIPPY curriculum, HIPPY parents learn to build a relationship with their child’s school. Home Visitors who worked with the newly arrived refugees observed an increase in comfort in the relationship of the HIPPY parents in their children’s school. One Home Visitor reported that parents’ confidence increased when they recognized that the school curriculum was similar to

HIPPY's, which they already knew and understood. The Home Visitor relayed the parent's comment:

*...and I understand what he is doing at school so I think, I am more confident.*

– HIPPY Parent

A Home Visitor observed:

*They have the confidence now to attend the school conferences and meet the teacher and ask for advice on how their children can do better in school. In the past they did not have all these ideas about what happens in school; they didn't know and they didn't have this relationship between the mother and the school or teacher but after that, as they joined the HIPPY program and joined the group meetings, they had this ability to talk to the school.*

In the HIPPY program, we recognize that, through the daily interaction of parents and children with the curriculum, a bond is strengthened between the two that is both essential for strong attachment and critical to the child's development. We also recognize that, for many families living under extreme duress or on the edge of survival, the parent-child bond is often strained. Sometimes the cultural expectations and style of parent-child relationships is different than in a Western context. A Home Visitor shared this insight:

*For most of them, they are not used to this relationship between mother and child. I mean they had a relationship but in a different way. There are cultural differences; in each culture they have different attitudes.*

Regardless, the program structure, with its play- and reading-time, naturally evolved the bond. One Home Visitor observed:

*You can see the differences from when I started visiting to now, with 14 to 15 of my families; there is a big change in how they are interacting with their children and you can see that bond has grown stronger, which is lovely to see.*

### **Mothers' Community and Civic Engagement**

*Isolated mothers are offered connections to formal public services required to ensure the healthy development of children and families in the Canadian context.*

Through the referral process, the Home Visitors were able to connect families to a wide array of community services. One Home Visitor acknowledged the effectiveness of the collaborative community efforts:

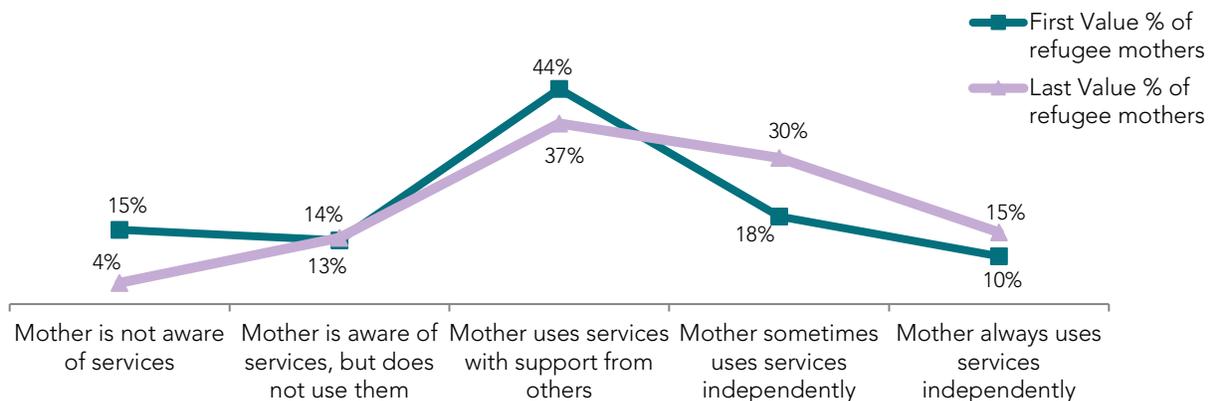
*Our city was very ready to take refugees. And I can say that the welcome was positive, very strong; they built that relationship with refugee families, and they gave them all the information they needed. Catholic Social Services, our organization, and all those other organizations, they helped refugees and provided faster service than with the previous group that came here. Maybe this was because we all had more experience than before. For me, the new refugees were also more ready to take all this information and adapt themselves within their new community, new situation, new language, new everything. HIPPY did not operate by itself. It was very helpful, especially for moms. If you look in the community, men are more outgoing than women; women mostly stay home, because of the number of children and also maybe because of their culture. But for this group I see, when they participated in the HIPPY program, and when they participated in ESL classes, you can see how they improved from the first month that they were here till now. That is not a very long time; it is less than one year.*

One Home Visitor noted that, for some, settlement and integration were slow – part of a step-by-step process.

*But maybe the process was not very fast. Maybe after they had finished the age 3 or age 4 program, you could see the results very clearly; they were more confident, and they learned something when they went outside. They felt they were confident to talk.*

Figure 16 below shows that, at the beginning of the program, 15% of mothers were not aware of services but, by the end of the program year, that number had decreased to 4% and, by the end of the program, 45% of mothers were using services mostly independently. This is significant and reflects HIPPY Home Visitors’ training not create dependency but to nurture growth and independence in the families with whom they work.

Figure 16: Mother is connected to public services (such as affordable housing, health care, education, and employment services etc.) that are required to ensure the well-being of the family

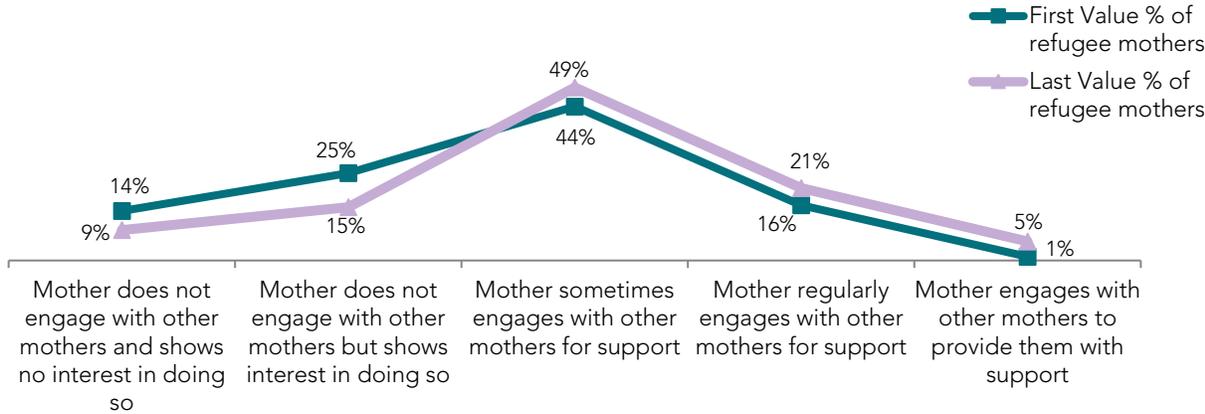


*Isolated mothers create informal social support networks with other mothers in similar situations with whom they can share their experiences and knowledge.*

The first step in breaking the mother’s isolation is when she invites a Home Visitor into her home. For some families, trusting the Home Visitor enough to invite them into their home was a big first step.

In *Figure 17*, the process of breaking isolation for new refugee mothers is clearly shown. At the beginning of the program, 14% of mothers showed no interest of engaging with other mothers but, by the end of the program year, that number had decreased to 9%. On the other hand, at the start of the program, 44% of mothers sometimes engaged with other mothers for support, and that number increased to 49% at the end. Overall, we can conclude that at least 75% of mothers sometimes and regularly engaged with other mothers for support.

*Figure 17: Mother creates relationships / friendships with other mothers in similar situations with whom she can share her experiences and knowledge*



Second, regular biweekly group meetings that encourage mothers to meet and share stories on parenting, settlement and other topics are an integral part of the HIPPPY program model. Home Visitors encourage mothers to attend by providing bus fare and childcare. One Home Visitor noted a change in the families she worked with:

*I can notice that mothers are actively attending other school conferences and group meetings. I have the biggest number of mothers attending the group meeting, with 60 to 70 percent attending. They also attend library programs and community events.*

Two Home Visitors who worked specifically with refugee families, made the group meetings a high priority and saw positive results. They described the meetings:

*In total we work with 14 moms each, but the kids are in different age groups. Out of 14 moms, 8 came to the group meeting. We had a plan on how to encourage these moms to come and we successfully did it. When they came, we provided them with some food and some interaction among the moms, including their names and phone numbers so that they could reach each other. They were not all Syrians; there were also some refugees from Iraq. The kids were so happy, we developed some activities for them, and the moms were relaxed and happy. In our first group meeting we talked about how we deliver the curriculum and had a talk on public transit, because it was very hard for them to go to the train station and come to the location of the group meeting. We had to pick them up from the train station. We gave a short presentation and handouts to them on how to use public transportation and they were very happy.*

In some cases, refugees arrived with extended families that provided an instant network of support. The Home Visitors explained that they relied heavily on family members for mutual support, child care, and housing.

## **Children Change**

*Children have skills that enable them to succeed in school.*

At this point the information that we have on child success in school is anecdotal. Many of the HIPPY activities are similar to what the children are experiencing in school. The mothers are observing important skills that prepare them to adapt and succeed in kindergarten:

*The mothers noticed even the improvement of their children, their attitudes, and learning skills and habits.*

Parents told Home Visitors that their children are meeting and even exceeding the expectations of the school. One Home Visitor reported:

*More than one mom has told me that the teacher says their sons are brilliant. They know how to teach their children, because what they see in the HIPPY program at home, they also see in the school.*

Another Home Visitor heard similar words of praise:

*One of the children is in kindergarten and the teacher said that he now knows and understands some words in English, and she said that this is because the mom is in the HIPPY program. So I was happy because they are really benefitting from the program. So in my opinion they're really interested in learning English and what is in the program, because they learn new ideas and concepts.*

And still another Mother reports:

*The teachers always say, “Oh, your child is very good. They are good at holding the pen, and colouring.” They have information about what happens when they first go to school, including concepts like sit down and stand up. So I think they are doing well, especially age five.*

– HIPPY Parent

## Section 5: Conclusion

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FALL 2017

After conversations with we HIPPY Home Visitors and analysis of the research data, we propose the following recommendations, which have implications for funding, supervision, and program operations at the site level, and training at both the national and site levels. Many of these recommendations come from the interviews and the experimental strategies Home Visitors created on the fly. We would like to streamline these innovations and augment them where necessary. (Please see Appendix #3: *Proposal to IRCC for Refugee Program Innovations*, for a more comprehensive plan for HIPPY program delivery innovations).

Our recommendations seek to strike a balance. We want to remain connected to our core: supporting isolated mothers to prepare their children for success in school and beyond, which includes all the supports that naturally come with this effort. However, we also want to ensure that we leverage our position as the primary, and often the most consistent, community support contact who can ease and expedite the settlement process of refugee mothers and their families.

#### Community Connections

Home Visitors will require training to be better able to unravel the complex systems of social services in order to know how to make referrals, how to determine which services to use, and how to place them in logical order. They should not be caught unprepared for refugees' questions or for the circumstances in which they find refugee families during their home visits. Additional training will include information on what we know about the families visited in the 2015-16 year and the types of issues Home Visitors confronted. This may include developing a triage referral system for such vital needs as housing, food, medical, schools, or employment. Home Visitors should be equipped with application forms and brochures in anticipation of the needs of families. They should have at the ready key contacts for those in their host organizations and elsewhere who can provide support in any of the triaged areas.

We recommend a tag-team approach between Home Visitors and the settlement workers. We will examine the benefits of partnering with a settlement worker for the home visits periodically as needed. This should ease the burden of complicated referrals and ensure a quicker response time. Home Visitors could play a role in helping mothers identify questions in advance of the meeting.

To reduce the requests that Home Visitors receive for translating and completing documents, a cadre of volunteers could be recruited to translate documents at group meetings. Settlement workers, housing authorities, school personnel and healthcare professionals should also be invited to group meetings for presentations and question-and-answer sessions. Having these resources available at group meetings may incentivize families to attend them and alleviate duplication of efforts.

Additional training required for the settlement process for refugees could be achieved by revising our existing training materials and collaborating with each host agency to ensure that the information coincides with their complement of services. Ideally, we would develop a team of Home Visitors to provide advice and ideas based on their rich and varied experiences to enhance the curriculum.

## **HIPPY Curriculum**

We heard clearly that the effort required to translate the books and curriculum repeatedly with each home visit was consistently prolonging home visits. HIPPY Canada has engaged Arabic translators of HIPPY books and the corresponding activities in the parent child-curriculum. But we also heard that families were relying on the HIPPY program materials to learn basic English and French vocabulary. Consequently, the translated books and their curriculum will be prepared in a bilingual format and the balance of the curriculum will remain in English or French. This approach will enable mothers to continue to benefit from the incidental English or French they learn through the program.

We will also examine the curriculum to ensure its ease of use. In the short term, we will investigate a universal pictorial language for exercises that repeat such as “over and under,” “same and different,” etc. in order to cue parents to the content more quickly.

We will further support some of the strategies developed by the Home Visitors such as spelling key English and French words phonetically in Arabic or picture reading.

Over the next 18 months, the HIPPY program is considering revision to its curriculum and will probably adopt HIPPY Australia’s newly revised curriculum, which is more colourful and with more illustrations.

## **English and French Language Learning**

We want to reexamine our capacity to use the HIPPY program as a tool for learning English and French. We are confident that there is a fair amount of incidental language learning taking place through the use of the HIPPY parent-child curriculum and Home Visitor intervention. Some Home Visitors claim that mothers have learned to speak basic English and French through the program, and others have observed the learning of at least key words. Regardless, the question is: does HIPPY have a role to play? Based on a request from the policy division of IRCC, in the fall of 2016, HIPPY Canada submitted a concept paper on combining LINC with HIPPY. We explored a combination of neighborhood language-learning groups and in-home instruction. This concept is still under consideration.

## The Home Visit

We are more convinced than ever of the efficacy of the peer home visiting approach to reach out to mothers and break their isolation. The typical single hour may not be sufficient if Home Visitors are to have the time they need to provide referrals, connections and other support. This would require a renegotiation with our funders to increase the visiting time for Home Visitors, particularly in the first three months of settlement.

## CONCLUSION

Refugee women are among the most vulnerable populations in the world. Forced displacement disrupts generations of mutual family and community support. Over 50% of the refugee families that participated in the HIPPY program last year arrived from refugee camps and some of those children were born in camps. Education, as well English- and French-language levels were, on the whole, much lower than other newcomer groups in the HIPPY program.

In far too many cases, newcomer and, specifically, refugee mothers remain at risk in Canada. Cultural norms and the mothers' responsibility for the family and the house limit many mothers' engagement in the community. As Canadians, we bear a responsibility to ensure their safety and potential for a better and more fulfilling life. Canada has the resources and the services to encourage refugee mothers to participate fully in Canadian civic life and ensure that they are positioned to support their children to reach their fullest potential in their new home country.

HIPPY Home Visitors are among the "first responders." They meet refugee families at their most vulnerable, shortly after arrival. They describe mothers in the early stages of settlement as overwhelmed, paralyzed by the number of decisions to be made and systems to navigate. It is clear that peer Home Visitors occupy a privileged position: they are invited into a relationship of trust with refugee mothers and their children and into their modest homes by a group of women who have not known security or stability for a long time. With this comes a responsibility to honour our commitment to these mothers. We cannot take the position of HIPPY as usual. As the Home Visitors in the recent program have done, we must continue to do more.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX #1: Quantitative Summary of Home Visitors' Comments

### Sites interviewed:

- Brooks (AB)
- CIWA Calgary
- Ottawa (Vanier Community Services Centre)
- Winnipeg
- Red Deer
- Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS)

Number of Home Visitors interviewed: 12

MAIN CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	VALUE
Post-traumatic stress disorder	<b>Responses</b>	<b>7</b>
	Experiences the refugees went through, being in survival mode	5
	Training (counselling) needs and finding a safe place	2
Basic needs (food, etc.)	<b>Responses</b>	<b>17</b>
	Food and shopping (meat, bread, diapers, clothing, etc.)	15
	Phone calls, reading bills, making medical appointments	8
	Family services	6
	Translation	5
	English classes	4
	BC housing	3
Employment	2	
Large family size	<b>Responses</b>	<b>6</b>
	7 to 10 kids	3
	6 kids	2
Privately sponsored	<b>Responses</b>	<b>5</b>
	Housing & computer	5
Sponsored by government	<b>Responses</b>	<b>6</b>
	Families lived in refugee camps ranging from 2 months to 5 to 6 years	
	Families left Syria and lived in countries around Syria For one HV all of them are sponsored by the Government	

MAIN CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	VALUE
Sub-standard housing	<b>Responses</b>	<b>22</b>
	BC Housing	5
	Apartment	4
	Basement	1
Understanding Canadian social system	<b>Responses</b>	<b>9</b>
	To go to community services for interpretation	3
	Appointments / shopping	1
	English classes	1
	Settlement workers	1
Biases and discrimination	<b>Responses</b>	<b>1</b>
	Heavy biases	1
First language level – different literacy levels	<b>Responses</b>	<b>10</b>
	Can't read and write in their own language	5
	Low literacy level	1
	English level 1 & 2	4
Language barriers	<b>Responses</b>	<b>18</b>
	Need translation	7
	Level of English 1 & 2	5
	Low in communication	1
	Don't know English	5
	Good English	1
Insufficient French / English classes	<b>Responses</b>	<b>9</b>
	Asking for English classes	4
	Better when attending ESL classes	3
	Going to college	2
HIPPY as English or French language program	<b>Responses</b>	<b>15</b>
	Extended family including moms learning English through HIPPY program	9
	HV prefers to teach in English to help them learn English	2
	Understands English well	1
	Translation	4
	Enjoying the program	2

MAIN CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	VALUE
	<b>Responses</b>	<b>33</b>
Translation needs of HIPPY program	Curriculum translation	18
	Family activities, community services	8
	Phone calls, reading bills, doctor appointments	3
	Asking for clothing, food	2
	HV prefers to do the curriculum in English	2
	<b>Responses</b>	<b>9</b>
Social isolation	Dealing with a lot of isolation	4
	Less isolated due to HIPPY program	3
<b>ADJUSTMENTS MADE BY THE HOME VISITOR</b>		
	<b>Responses</b>	<b>13</b>
Home Visitor / parent relationship	Enjoying and benefiting from the program	7
	First HIPPY, then other questions	4
	Breaking the curriculum (sometimes heavy for mom)	1
	<b>Responses</b>	<b>29</b>
Additional support given by Home Visitors	Connect with other social services (counselling, schools, food bank etc.)	16
	Connect with settlement workers	5
	Help them with registration	4
	Health issues	3
	Other programs, ESL classes	3
	Low English level	3
	Basic needs (food, diapers)	8
	Encourage to do activities for kids	1
	Need for translator	2
	<b>Responses</b>	<b>16</b>
Home Visitor setting boundaries	First HIPPY, then other questions	7
	Have no time due to other commitments	4
	Help with basic needs	6
	Need someone to listen to them / trauma	2
	Connect with other services	1
	Low in English	1
	Feel empathy	1

MAIN CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	VALUE
<b>FAMILY CHANGES OBSERVED BY HOME VISITOR</b>		
Confidence in mother	<b>Responses</b>	<b>20</b>
	Not confident in the past (role-play, parenting)	4
	See a lot of changes	6
	More confident with HIPPY program (role-play, group meetings, deliver to child)	6
	Happy to learn English	1
	Interact with child more	4
	Already confident	1
	New refugees more confident	2
ESL classes	1	
Employment / business / income-generation	<b>Responses</b>	<b>3</b>
	Looking for work	4
	Attend income-generation programs such as sewing	3
	ESL classes	2
Children not prepared for school	<b>Responses</b>	<b>2</b>
	Never been exposed to education	1
	Struggling, feeling vulnerable	3
	Don't know language	1
	Lack of confidence to go to school	1
Need for support workers at school	2	
Child change	<b>Responses</b>	<b>7</b>
	Improvement in child	5
	Having quality time with child	1
	Already knew the activities	1
More informed about child at school	1	
Parent-child change	<b>Responses</b>	<b>11</b>
	Having quality time – mother / child	10
	Do roleplay and activity with the child; better mother-child relationship	6
Learning English (mom & kid)	5	
Enjoying the program	<b>Responses</b>	<b>9</b>
	Really enjoying the program	5
	Moms and kids happier	3
	Child improvement, learning skills, habits	1
Learning English	1	
Social inclusion	<b>Responses</b>	<b>13</b>
	Reduction in isolation by attending HIPPY program	9
	Losing family support	1

MAIN CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	VALUE
Home Visitor change / lessons learned	<b>Responses</b>	<b>8</b>
	Happy to work with the refugee families	6
	Need for training for HVs	3
	Mixing education with life skills programs for refugees	1
HIPPY program adjustment	<b>Responses</b>	<b>46</b>
	Need for translation	7
	Simpler skill boxes, books, worksheets	8
	Using hands, body language & pictures	3
	Don't speak English or low English	5
	English language improvement	3
	Low literacy level in first language	2
	Happy to have book in Arabic	2
	Prefer to teach in English	1
	Breaking the curriculum	1
Modification to the curriculum	1	

## APPENDIX 2: HIPPY Canada Professional Development Program

**Home Visiting 1** (Introductory Level) – Participants learn the history and value of home visiting as a social service approach, and practice some of the core skills of home visiting such as safety protocols and professional boundaries.

**Home Visiting 2** (Intermediate Level) – Participants identify some of the types of crisis that some families face such as domestic violence, child abuse, addictions and mental illness – and learn the protocols for responding to these situations if they encounter them in their work.

**Adult Education 1** (Introductory Level) – Participants learn some of the theory and core approaches used when teaching adults such as learning styles and motivating adults to learn, and practice the delivery of formalized lesson plans.

**Adult Education 2** (Intermediate Level) – Participants explore some of the techniques used to teach adults, to maximize engagement and participation, and continue to practice the delivery of formalized lesson plans.

**Early Childhood Development & Parenting Skills 1** (Introductory Level) – Participants learn about child growth and development, brain development, and the development of children’s behaviour from ages 0 to 5.

**Early Childhood Development & Parenting Skills 2** (Intermediate Level) – Participants examine the roles parents play in their child’s physical and mental well-being and discover how parental stress and a child’s temperament (or personality) affect their behaviour.

**Immigrant Settlement and Integration 1** (Introductory Level) – Participants explore the core needs of newly arrived refugees, and discover new resources and approaches for assisting HIPPY refugee families with this process.

**Immigrant Settlement & Integration 2** (Intermediate Level) – Participants explore some of the main challenges that newcomer parents face when raising children in a new culture, such as maintaining traditions and language and responding to racism.

**Building Bridges with First Peoples in Canada 1** (Introductory Level) – Non-Aboriginal participants learn about the history and impacts of colonialism and residential schools on the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada.

**Building Bridges with First Peoples in Canada 2** (Intermediate Level) – Non-Aboriginal participants look at the current context of Aboriginal peoples in Canada including the pursuit of rights and title, political resistance, and the resurgence of traditional culture. They also explore collaboration and reconciliation among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and communities.

**Transition Planning and Job Search 1** (Introductory Level) – Participants reflect upon their experience, skills, passions and interests, to explore possible future careers that best fit their unique personalities and interests.

**Transition Planning and Job Search 2** (Intermediate Level) – Participants research their top career choices and plan successful transition into work or school after their employment with HIPPY is complete.

### **Personal Growth & Leadership Skills**

**Emotionally Intelligent Parenting Skills** – Participants learn to teach their children about expressing emotions, and listening to understand how their children might be feeling.

**Happiness Habits** – Participants learn the new science of happiness, how to create it and inspire others to create more health and happiness in their own lives.

**Setting Professional Boundaries** – Participants explore the delicate balance between serving families, treating people with empathy and compassion, creating dependency, and knowing when to set limits.

**Self-Care** – Participants explore the importance of self-care when working in a social services context.

**Communications** – A three-part series on improving communication skills at home and in the workplace.

**Leadership skills development** – a four-part series on.

## APPENDIX # 3: Proposal to IRCC for Refugee Program Innovations

### Proposed Innovation

#### Program Goal

*To address systemic access barriers of isolated, newly-arrived refugees.*

#### Objective

*To provide a flexible, responsive, and human-centred case management approach to support newly arrived refugees in a way that will recognize their individual needs and strengths.  
Refugee Resource Bank*

Our proposed innovation will better enable us to anticipate and prepare for the needs of newly arrived refugees through individualized program delivery strategies that will allow us to accommodate the diverse situations faced by each family.

There are several parts to our innovation, each of which is designed to address systemic barriers to access to settlement services for vulnerable newly arrived refugees.

The goal of the Refugee Resource Bank is to ensure that HIPPY sites across Canada have the flexibility to offer a customized HIPPY program delivery and an individualized settlement strategy for each refugee family. When it becomes clear that the typical HIPPY program delivery is not working, Coordinators will have resources to support the Home Visitors to ensure each family's success in the HIPPY program and consequently their improved settlement in Canada.

This innovation will provide each HIPPY site with a “bank” of new tools, resources, and funds, pro-rated based on the number of refugee families served, along with a series of modifications to the HIPPY program itself. Each site will develop a local team comprising the HIPPY site Coordinator, a settlement worker (described below), and a HIPPY Home Visitor to administer and monitor their local Refugee Resource Bank.

#### HIPPY Program Settlement Worker

In our research earlier this year, it became apparent that HIPPY Home Visitors were called upon for support that far exceeded the typical Home Visitor role, and in some cases, their capacity and training. When asked about the role of the settlement workers, Home Visitors responded that they found settlement workers were overwhelmed and therefore not accessible to families. A critical aspect of this innovation is to ensure that HIPPY Home Visitors have ready access to settlement workers, to ensure that Home Visitors and Coordinators remain focused more on the HIPPY program mandate, and that families receive the individualized support they need to settle effectively.

We propose that each site be allocated a portion of a settlement worker's time with resources from the Refugee Resource Bank. The settlement worker will integrate into the local HIPPY team in activities such as attending weekly training meetings, developing the individualized HIPPY case management plan, preparing the local "Top Ten Tool Kit," etc.

### **Pre-Assessment**

At the beginning of the year, the Home Visitor, Coordinator and / or settlement worker will visit each family to determine the individualized strategy for delivery and the most appropriate tools (i.e., modified versions of the HIPPY program or time allocations per family). The assessment will include family circumstances (e.g., whether they came from a refugee camp and how long they were there, etc.), parental education levels, English or French language levels, number of children, and housing conditions.

### **Enhancing the Delivery Approach and Support Services**

Not all family needs and strengths are the same. The pre-assessment will determine the kind of additional supports the family needs from the Refugee Resource Bank. We will clearly articulate a menu of eligible services that will include:

- a) Additional time for home visits
- b) Additional time to take families to appointments
- c) Credit to access translation services
- d) Extending the HIPPY program year
- e) Support for additional child care while parents are participating in programming

The strategies will be reviewed five times during the program year with each family at the same time as the HIPPY progress reports.

The parent progress report tool (PPR) uses a rating scale (indicators of success) for each identified outcome in a progression from low to high and is completed five times during the program year by both the Coordinator and the Home Visitor. During one-on-one meetings, the Coordinator and Home Visitor discuss and agree on how the parent is progressing. The final agreed-upon results are then entered into ETO by the Coordinator. The first PPR measurement serves as the baseline against which future progress is measured.

### **HIPPY Program Menu**

Over the last several years HIPPY Canada has developed innovations based on the HIPPY program to meet the diverse needs of program participants. In this proposal, the sites will be able to choose the most appropriate of these innovations to meet specific family needs and strengths. In addition to the HIPPY program, these innovations include *Welcome to Canada*, a five-week, play-based program that focuses on parent-child interactions, and *Bond to Literacy*, a 12-week,

group program consisting of activity packages based on six colourful and engaging storybooks, that focus on developing a love of reading and enhancing the parent-child bond. Another innovation is the *HIPPY Booster* program, designed for this project, a 24-week program adapted from our age-5 program for children who are not meeting the expectations of the school. All are designed to be delivered in either group or in-home settings.

All programs in the Refugee Resource Bank maintain the tried and true core elements of the HIPPY program:

- Mothers rather than external professionals to help other mothers in their own communities. This peer-based approach has reaped rewards for the HIPPY program, a community-based, mother-to-mother approach used successfully for decades in Canada and elsewhere.
- A foundational premise that all mothers are the best catalyst for change within their families and communities. Motivated by the desire to secure the best for their children, mothers, if they receive the right kind of support, can overcome any obstacle.
- Materials that are easy to follow and engage children. When a mother observes her child's progress, she is motivated to continue.
- Building the parent-child bond. Each program provides structured support for parents to read and do daily activities with their children. For many, this is a new experience valued as much by the mother as by the child.
- Expenses to participate covered by funders, which reduces any financial barriers for families to participate.

We recognize that, for new Home Visitors, it may be difficult to deliver a variety of programs. At the same time, the core elements and principles of all these programs remain consistent with the HIPPY program. We recommend that experienced Home Visitors who are highly skilled and may be more prepared for this challenge be utilized for the Refugee Resource Bank innovation. Their deeper experience will also increase their capacities and advance their careers as they begin to transition out of HIPPY.

## **Programs Available Based on Family Needs**

### *Standard HIPPY Program*

HIPPY is a three-year program for parents of children ages three, four and five years old. The program runs 30 weeks per year concurrent with the school year. Program features include the recruitment of isolated, low-income, newcomer and refugee families to participate in the program; home visits by a member of their peer community as a strategy to reach out to these

families; group meetings as a means to increase social inclusion; the provision of a parent-led preschool curriculum to improve the success of their children in school; and the training of parents to develop the skills needed to guide their children through the curriculum and prepare them to start school successfully.

It is appropriate for: Isolated, newly arrived refugees who have found somewhat stable housing and have addressed some of their basic settlement needs.

### ***Welcome to Canada***

Our partners have identified that the period immediately after arrival is a time of “waiting” for many refugees, for two weeks up to three months.

The *Welcome to Canada* proposal is designed to take advantage of this waiting period, to provide a positive parent-child intervention that seeks to re-establish a healthy bond and rebuild parental agency.

*Welcome to Canada* will be adapted from the *HIPPY Summer Program*, which was designed to engage isolated, newcomer families in fun and creative group learning activities (rather than home visits) to help parents prepare their children to enter the Canadian school system.

Consistent with the HIPPY program methodology of parents teaching parents, at a weekly group meeting parents were taught home-based activities to do with their children during the week, including ideas for field trips. We partner First Book Canada, which provides families with free books. For parents of kindergarten children, we offer the TVO – HIPPY Canada *Get Ready for School* program.

It is appropriate for refugees on arrival. During a period of forced displacement, many strains are put on the parent-child relationship and the role of the parent is often weakened or supplanted by others. This intervention would re-establish that bond and help settle families into a routine of preparing their children to succeed in school.

### ***Bond to Literacy***

Borrowing from the HIPPY parent-child curriculum, HIPPY Canada developed a 12-week *Bond to Literacy* program consisting of activity packages based on six colourful and engaging storybooks. Each activity package is designed to be delivered at home, mother-to-child, 15 minutes per day, 5 days per week. This simple curriculum provides sufficient structure for parents to share the program with their child. The activities are fun and educational and timed to engage children and leave them wanting more the next day.

In a weekly group meeting, peer Community Facilitators discuss with mothers the previous week's activities and role-play the upcoming week's activities. Mothers are encouraged to share

experiences with one another. With peer support, mothers learn from one another and create an informal network. Group meetings also include guest speakers who deliver useful information and skills. Childcare is provided.

In turn, mothers work daily with their children at home, reading and carrying out the fun activities. They develop a habit of reading and sitting with their child, which lays the foundation for a new lifestyle of parent-child time and bonding.

It is appropriate for newly arrived refugees who are still in a state of flux and not yet ready for the commitment required by a full (two to three-year) HIPPY program.

### ***HIPPY Booster Program***

The *HIPPY Booster* program is designed for children aged 5, 6, or 7 who, for various reasons do not meet the widely held expectations of primary schools. The HIPPY age-5 materials will be adapted for a combination of parent, teacher and child activities. Teachers will work with children daily during the school year, and parents will come in on a weekly or twice-weekly basis.

During the parent-child time, new books will be introduced and they will do crafts together. Children will be able to take the curriculum home and continue working with it. The focus will be on oral and written communication and math for children, to prepare them for and integrate them into the Canadian school system. This approach creates a play-based introduction to English or French language skills, building the confidence of both children and parents, strengthening the cultural competence of teachers and other professionals at the school, and making a connection between learning at home and learning at school. Parents are also able to make connections with other parents and community resources.

### **Community Asset Building Approach**

We remain committed to the HIPPY program's core mission: to develop the capacity of parents to support their children's success in school and beyond.

The HIPPY program has several complimentary outcomes, such as supporting mothers' engagement with their children's school and civic society. It is in the fulfillment of those outcomes that the Home Visitors themselves have naturally evolved their role to one of coach and social connector. The innovations suggested here attempt to recognize this role and equip Home Visitors with sufficient resources to provide families with timely and appropriate referrals and connections while, at the same time, not over-stepping the professional roles of ESL instructors and settlement workers.

The Asset Building Approach will enable Home Visitors to establish deeper community connections for families and link them to the resources they need to settle.

### *Top Ten Essential Community Connections*

Based on our work this year, we determined that there are predictably about ten resources required by families in the early stages of settlement. These include information on:

- 1) Housing
- 2) Outlets to meet basic needs like food banks
- 3) Schools and support workers at the schools
- 4) Transportation routes
- 5) Grief and post-traumatic stress counseling
- 6) English as a Second Language course
- 7) Employment counseling
- 8) Medical assistance
- 9) Legal assistance
- 10) Translation for all above

Currently, with the support of their Coordinator, Home Visitors may be searching for and making referrals to these resources and, in some cases, not know if follow up actually occurred. We are proposing to systematize the tools they need to better streamline these efforts and ensure that families connect to the other available resources.

The settlement worker and site Coordinator will be responsible for identifying contacts at resources for HIPPY families pertaining to each of the Top Ten Essential Services.

### *Top Ten Essential Connections Orientation Tour*

As part of the pre-service orientation, the Coordinator and Home Visitors will go on a tour of the Top Ten Essential Services locations and meet with the contact person there prepared to handle HIPPY referrals. The Home Visitor will be better equipped to understand the type of support available there, and to make informed referrals and connections for families.

### *Top Ten Tool Kit*

Each Home Visitor will be provided with a complete package of information, forms, contact information, etc. for all the community resources identified and will have this information immediately accessible when families identify a need.

## Home Visitor Training Program

HIPPY Canada has created training resources to teach Home Visitors how to identify and respond to the needs presented by refugee families. This proposal will enable us to deepen this training further and ensure that Home Visitors working with refugees are equipped with the skills and confidence to respond to the complex needs of refugee families, while recognizing when they have reached the limits of their role and training and connect families as appropriate to other community resources.