

## Shared Learning Local Hub Sessions around Niagara



***Interagency Collaboration for Person-Centered Service Delivery focused on Client Success***

### **2016 Discussion Themes**

Shared Learning Local Hub (SLLH) sessions are held in 5 areas across Niagara, for front-line community service and outreach workers to:

- Connect for shared learning;
- Share ideas and best practice information to enable client success; and
- Strengthen relationships concerning clients' access to services and benefits.

Niagara Connects acts as Backbone Support<sup>1</sup>, within a Collective Impact approach, by facilitating Niagara-wide coordination among SLLH Leaders; gathering and analyzing annual Niagara-wide themes arising from 'burning issues' discussed at SLLH sessions; raising awareness about opportunities to participate in SLLH Sessions; and sharing SLLH Session activities on the Niagara Knowledge Exchange (NKE), at: <http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/partners-projects/shared-learning-local-hubsessions/>

In 2016, a total of 12 SLLH Sessions were hosted in the 5 hub locations across Niagara. An average of 19 people from 13 different agencies participated in each session.

Most commonly reported benefits of attending SLLH Sessions focused on opportunities to:

1. Network with other frontline workers
2. Be better equipped to help clients (eg. by providing more effective referrals)
3. Receive updates from other agencies, about programs and available resources
4. Improve ability to cope with work-related stress and compassion fatigue
5. Collaborate, brainstorm, expand thinking by taking a step back from regular work activities

SLLH participants noted 'taking time away from clients' as a disadvantage of attending Sessions, although they saw this balanced by sessions being held, at the most, quarterly.

SLLH formats vary across the 5 Hub locations in Niagara. Each part of Niagara has unique priorities and interests; various players participate in the Sessions for different purposes. This variation is a significant part of what makes the SLLH model work – each group takes leadership to determine their priorities, and how they will achieve impact within the SLLH framework.

<sup>1</sup> Collective Impact, Kania & Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter, 2011.

### Most Common Topics discussed during SLLH Sessions around Niagara

In 2016 SLLH Leaders report a shift away from discussing many of the same burning issues each session. Compared to 2015, their conversations have shifted more toward solutions-based discussions focused on a smaller number of topics.

2015	2016
<p>A wide range of ‘burning issues’ were discussed at SLLH sessions around Niagara in 2015. The most common (in order by frequency of mentions) included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Affordable, safe, stable housing, including maintenance and utilities.</li> <li>2) The importance of working together toward Collective Impact*.</li> <li>3) Access to affordable transportation.</li> <li>4) Securing sustainable funding and meeting obligations to funders (eg. time to complete paperwork).</li> <li>5) Access to employment services, including services to help newcomers utilize their existing credentials, learn the language, and find employment.</li> <li>6) Access to affordable childcare.</li> <li>7) Access to affordable dental care.</li> <li>8) Helping clients overcome barriers to obtaining social assistance so that they have a livable income.</li> <li>9) Long waitlists for mental health and other services.</li> <li>10) Literacy, including financial literacy.</li> <li>11) Staff burnout.</li> <li>12) Engaging the community and attracting volunteers.</li> </ol> <p>Other concerns included healthcare outreach, seniors, and clients’ access to the Internet.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Housing</b> affordability and availability. One SLLH group discussed exploring ways to engage with landlords for the purpose of expanding housing options for low-income households.</li> <li>2. <b>Transportation</b> limitations and affordability</li> <li>3. <b>Mental health and addictions</b>, including suicide prevention and overdose training.</li> </ol> <p>Other topics included dental health, compassion fatigue, legal aid, volunteer recruitment, and waitlists for developmental services.</p>

Front-line community service and outreach workers report that SLLH Sessions around Niagara are useful for networking to strengthen inter-agency relationships. This leads to improved satisfaction with their own work, due to strengthened ability to connect clients with services.

These workers cite opportunities to learn about other programs, agencies, and resources available as improving their own ability to serve their clients and provide referrals.

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