



# Supporting Transition Resilience of Newcomer Groups (STRONG)

How can MENTAL HEALTH LEADS and CLINICAL SUPERVISORS support STRONG clinicians?

## What is STRONG?

STRONG is a school-based group intervention that was developed to promote resilience and reduce psychological distress among newcomer students. The program aims to promote individual strengths, build skills to make positive choices, and provide a sense of self and belonging. STRONG is a manualized intervention and has two versions: elementary and secondary. Licensed mental health clinicians in schools (i.e., social workers or psychologists) receive training to implement STRONG with newcomer students.

### Program Structure

- Ten weekly group sessions
- One additional individual session with each participant to help them process their journey narrative
- Students are encouraged to practice the STRONG skills outside of sessions
- Clinicians are also encouraged to facilitate a parent meeting as part of the program



### 2 Years of Piloting in Ontario

1

#### 2017-2018

- Piloted in two school boards (10 schools)

2

#### 2018-2019

- Piloted in three school boards
- One school board (six STRONG groups) participated in a feasibility study

## How does STRONG impact students?



Increase resilience



Enhance school connectedness



Learn important coping skills



Have an encouraging environment to practice English



Come together as a newcomer group to share stories and strengthen relationships

*"In this school, I was going away from everyone, like I don't talk to anyone at all, I am always by myself, so when I started coming here [STRONG], let's say, if I see a student from here, I say HI. At least there is a "hi" in there" - **Student***

*"I am also thinking how their language has changed. There was more talk about resiliency and strength and learning..." - **Clinician***

## What Benefits do Clinicians Report?

- Increased in knowledge and self-efficacy to work with newcomer students
- New connections and learning with colleagues
- Satisfaction from working with and learning from newcomer students

## How can Mental Health Leads and Clinical Supervisors support STRONG Clinicians?

Consider the following ways to support STRONG clinicians:

### **Getting Started: Connecting, Recruiting, and Setting up Supplemental Services**

- Integrate the STRONG referral form into board's existing referral system to access school-based clinical services
- Connect clinicians with school personnel (e.g., principals) and community partners (e.g., settlement workers) to identify potential students who may benefit from the STRONG program
- Interpreters may be needed to facilitate communication with families, students and/or during the intervention. Support clinicians to find and set up consistent interpreters.

### **Implementation Support: Running STRONG in schools**

- Help clinicians gain school-level commitment for the STRONG program

*For example, an information session about STRONG at school staff meetings may help to develop a shared understanding among all staff members about the importance and objectives of the program.*

- Collaborate with school personnel and supporting clinicians to find suitable time and space in schools for the weekly group sessions
- Explore whether additional financial resources can be allocated to the program (e.g., snacks for students during groups)

### **Clinical and Peer Support: Supervision, Consultation, and Community of Practice**

- Along with receiving clinical supervision, it may be beneficial for clinicians to connect as a group regularly and have opportunities for peer consultations to exchange ideas and share learning of implementing the program and working with newcomer students
- Encourage clinicians to access any available coaching or consultation supports

For more information on previous STRONG Pilots, please visit  
[www.csmh.uwo.ca/research/strong.html](http://www.csmh.uwo.ca/research/strong.html)



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