



CWICE 5th Annual Impact Report 2022/23



CWICE

Child Welfare Immigration
Centre of Excellence

Compiled by: Danielle Ungara, RSW



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Introduction

Dear readers,

On behalf of the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE), I am pleased to present to you our annual report for the year 2022/23. As we approach our fifth anniversary in June 2023, we reflect on the remarkable journey we have taken and the positive impact we have made in the lives of vulnerable children, youth, caregivers, and professionals.

At CWICE, we strive to make a meaningful difference through our various projects and initiatives which aim to provide vital support and services to children and youth navigating the complexities of child welfare and immigration systems. This annual report provides key data, but it is the people, feedback, and stories behind the numbers that truly capture the essence of our work. From the joy of hearing a ringing bell when we achieve a positive outcome for a client, to the pride we feel when a young person takes their citizenship oath, or the satisfaction of seeing a cohort complete our CWICE 101-108 training, it is the moments and stories that resonate with us the most.

As we look ahead, we are aware of the new Ontario's Quality Standards Framework to Improve the Quality of Care for Children and Young Persons in care, which is set to come into effect in July 2023. While these changes hold promise, we understand that they may require support. CWICE is committed to assisting child welfare organizations in implementing strategies and practices to uphold these regulations, as detailed in Appendix B of this report. In the upcoming year, our commitment remains unwavering in evaluating needs, innovating our programming, building new partnerships, and contributing to knowledge creation in our sector. As we continue on our path towards child welfare redesign, CWICE will continue to reimagine the role child welfare plays in the lives of families, ensuring that our sector remains accountable to the children and youth we serve.

Our journey so far has been remarkable, and as we approach our fifth anniversary, we look forward to celebrating all that has been achieved, with the input and insights of our dedicated team members. From the initial year of CWICE, where we completed the third and final year of the Syrian Refugee Response Project, to the expansion of our outreach model to several settlement service providers and all families newly arrived at RAP centers, and the development of communication to sector leadership through Issue Notes and monthly e-newsletters distributed across Canada, our pathways to accessing information have expanded, and our impact has grown.

Once again, we extend our deepest appreciation for your continued support of CWICE. Together, we can continue to make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable children and youth, and we look forward to the next five years of this important work.

Sincerely,
Prasad Nair
Director – Permanency Planning, Peel CAS
Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE)



5 Year Reflections

This conversation was documented between CWICE Co-Managers, at the beginning of April 2023, in reflection about having just completed our fifth fiscal year co-managing CWICE together.

We thought we'd share excerpts of the conversation that highlight CWICE's activities this year.

Danielle:

The second half of this fiscal year was an exceptionally busy, yet important time. There was a large focus on delivering presentations, providing training, and responding to increased requests for service. What are you thinking about as we ended the year Liz?

Liz:

Yes Danielle, this past fiscal year, CWICE has seen more exposure, not just in the child welfare sector, but in many important spaces and across all levels of government and well beyond Ontario. Our partnerships and collaborative efforts have seen so much increase amidst new initiatives, like the Afghan and Ukrainian initiatives. CWICE has been consulted on important projects and invited to many important spaces, leading to several media requests for interviews.

Danielle:

From CBC to Global News to TVO. There has certainly been a keen interest in the work of CWICE, particularly in the thought leadership roles we've assumed these last five years. Sometimes I think back to the beginning, before the invitations to speak at a child welfare lawyer's conference or for the Ontario Bar Association. I think back to when we started down the path of partnership together and leading these incredible teams of talented people. I remember all the things we have been able to operationalize into reality, month after month, and year after year together.

Liz:

In five short years, our impact has been felt, not only by the children, youth, and families we serve, but by the cross-sectoral professionals who benefit from our thought leadership and capacity building programs. From the outreach program, the 8-course Certificate Training series for child welfare professionals, and the different speaking opportunities this year. We've participated in national and international Conferences, such as CCR Consultations, P2P, and Metropolis Conference. We truly have increased awareness of CWICE and enhanced capacity around the issues we care about. Global Affairs Canada entrusting us with training some of their consular officers around the world on important child welfare issues is really something! Wouldn't you say so?



Danielle:

Indeed, I would agree. Many, many, many people have entrusted all of us over these 5 years. From youth attending our first youth group meetings, to parents calling us for help to regularize their status, to colleagues across the world planning for children to return to Canada after traumatic events. The trust was conveyed to us by the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services when they designated CWICE a model of child welfare redesign in 2020. It was important to be acknowledged for our practices around engagement, early intervention, data intelligence, and equity integration. It is the trust of staff attending our training and referring their clients to us in times of need. Trust is there when new partners invite us to the table, and we feel the trust when professionals speak about us when we're not present. It is both the longtime partners, as well as new opportunities combined. It is IRCC and JIAS Toronto entrusting us to deliver recommendations for a national strategy to support Unaccompanied and Separated Children across Canada. It is a collection of moment-after-another x five years. All of it is both humbling and incredibly motivating.

***"The future depends
on what you do today."***

~Mahatma Gandhi

Liz:

It has been humbling indeed to see the smiles and tears of joy from sheer appreciation from families who benefit from the work we do. Whether it's assisting them with system navigation, providing an advocacy or support letter, or just linking parents with resources to cover basic needs of their children. We couldn't have done some of this incredible work without the unwavering support of Peel CAF (Peel Children's Aid Foundation). The Foundation has been incredible allies, helping us bridge some of the gaps, like alleviating food insecurity issues, and providing start up clothing for some families from Afghanistan and Ukraine this year. This humbling work with newcomer and refugee families have given our entire team a deeper appreciation of the challenges facing many families. Understanding identities and intersectionalities, through thorough assessments that include pre-and post-migration experiences, has led to the provision of culturally relevant and responsive services that we should be proud about.

Danielle:

We are a proud group of professionals and in many ways, we're just getting started! We aim to continue to deliver high-quality and outcome-focused service for families. We also commit to working with research partners and academics to document best practice approaches developed. We will continue to push towards child welfare redesign, through supporting agencies implementing incoming regulations this summer. We will continue to lead on many of the issues facing children and youth today and we will continue to reimagine the

role child welfare plays in the lives of families. As we end the year, I sincerely thank you Liz and our teams for the dedication every single day. You've all been a passionate group of advocates, allies, and leaders these past five years. It has been a pleasure to co-manage CWICE with you.

Liz:

Talking about a proud group of professionals, we have built so much capacity and expertise in these short five years, yet we know there is so much more to learn and do and are we ever ready! We will keep learning and innovating. With such a great and knowledgeable CWICE team, the sky is indeed the limit! We will continue to push and advocate for equity, education, research and system change across child welfare and beyond. And finally, Danielle, the feelings of gratitude and appreciation is mutual. I am grateful for the way you and I have grown and developed our partnership and collaboration in co-managing CWICE. I am sincerely thankful for you, our staff, and senior leaders!

Liz Okai

D. Ungara

Liz Okai, RSW and Danielle Ungara, RSW
Co-Managers of CWICE





Training Overview

How it started:

Mid-2019, Danielle Ungara designed the national child welfare dialogue conference series. With the support of Peel Children's Aid Foundation, we were able to host the inaugural event in January 2020 in Ottawa. Twelve of thirteen provinces and territories were represented by senior leaders in child welfare. There were several key endorsements agreed upon by delegates, including a request that CWICE develop training for staff across Canada (CWICE, 2020).

CWICE Immigration Specialist Claudia Obreque became a subject matter expert in January 2020, and co-developed the training series. The 8-course certificate CWICE training series was launched in June 2020 for child welfare professionals. While the vision for the training series has been adapted to virtual platforms during the pandemic, this actually made it more accessible for staff across Canada.

How it's going (2022/23)

Compiled by Claudia Obreque, Immigration Specialist & CWICE Training Lead

CWICE continues to deliver high quality training across the child welfare sector. We currently offer an 8-course certificate program for child welfare professionals across Canada, and a foster caregiver training.

The CWICE Certificate Program provides training participants with new knowledge related to immigration processes, settlement, and border-related issues. Through case scenarios, discussions, and reflection exercises, the training highlights the importance of understanding a person's migration history, experiences, and identity. Each course provides recommended practices, which focus on prevention, early intervention, and equitable practices.

Foster Caregivers Training: Foster caregivers play an important role in caring for children in-out-of-home care. In 2022, CWICE designed a training specifically for foster caregivers. The training launched at Peel CAS and has received very positive feedback. Our goal is to ensure all children in out-of-home-care are connected to the right supports at the right time. Foster caregivers are sometimes well connected to young adults who may have exited care with unresolved immigration status, and can now be connected to CWICE.

**The CWICE Certificate
Program is now
available to all child
welfare professionals
across Canada**



Training Highlights

"The training has proven to be very effective. Over the years, we've had 11 organizations join from across 3 provinces. We've trained over 150 professionals in Nova Scotia alone, as well as a specialized team in Saskatchewan. I'm proud to say child protection staff, child & youth workers, supervisors, and senior managers are among the three graduating cohorts to date." – Claudia Obreque, Training Lead

"We are proud of what we've accomplished. Based on demand, we've added a Frequently Asked Questions section to our website: www.cwice.ca/training and introduced a training email to field training inquiries: cwicetraining@peelcas.org. Training feedback has been consistently positive over the years, and we value the input of attendees. A selection of 2022/23 training evaluation quotes are included in Appendix A" – Danielle Ungara

Capacity Building Summary

(April 2022 to March 2023)

	Total attendance	# of Sessions	Total Training Hours
CWICE Modules (101 – 108)	312	24 courses	168
Foster Caregivers Training	36	2 trainings	12
Total (2022 -2023)	348	26	180
CWICE modules: each training session is 2 half-day sessions (3.5 hours/day); Foster caregiver training is 2 half-day sessions (3 hours/day)			

Three-Year Overview

(June 2020 to March 2023)

Total Training
Attendance
1032

Total Training
Sessions
69

Total Training
Hours
480



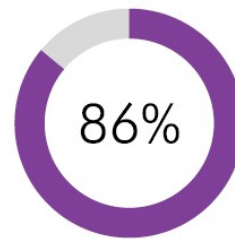
Training Expansion

“On behalf of Global Affairs Canada’s consular officials serving Canadians abroad, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to CWICE for their incredible work and all their efforts in supporting our most vulnerable clients over the years. CWICE’s dedicated team of professionals has been a valuable resource, providing consultation and support in managing complex child protection cases, with compassion and expertise, and increasing the knowledge of consular officials on child welfare issues. In addition, their engagement on specific cases has helped a number of vulnerable clients return safely to Canada and reintegrate from distressing circumstances. We deeply appreciate CWICE’s leadership and partnership and look forward to continuing our collaboration in the years ahead.”

**~Cindy McAlpine and Jezreel Trepanier,
Deputy Directors, Global Affairs Canada**

In 2022, we received several inquiries from professionals wishing to join training sessions. These requests were from settlement organizations, legal and social service professionals who work alongside child welfare professionals, and consular officer staff. Since then, CWICE has been in development of new training curriculum. Our training department looks forward to launching this on our website in 2023.

To bridge the development period, in February 2023, CWICE Managers Liz Okai and Danielle Ungara provided a workshop to 20 Consular and Policy professionals at Global Affairs Canada. Participants joined from Headquarters in Ottawa and missions across Germany. Entitled *Providing Service to Children, Youth, and Families*, the workshop provided an overview of child welfare in Canada, highlights about CWICE, tips to preparing to work with children, and indicators of risk. A survey was provided, to obtain feedback about the session, and 35% of attendees responded, sharing:



- Learned something new related to indicators of risk
- Learned something new regarding preparing to work with children and youth

“The information was presented in a well-structured manner and was very useful and relevant for doing our job. Thank you!”

“It was excellent. You do very important work. I would have also liked to hear case examples and how you approached those cases. What worked well in practice and what not.”

“Thanks for all the work you do. We think we are very fortunate to have CWICE to support us.”

“It was wonderful. We so appreciate our collaboration with CWICE and all your expertise and guidance.”



CWICE Outreach

How it started:

During the first year of CWICE, we completed the third and final year of the Syrian Refugee Response Project. In the design of CWICE, we used the same outreach model. For example, we continued to provide presentations to settlement service providers and families newly arrived at RAP centres within their first few weeks in Canada.

As CWICE developed, we also began providing presentations to staff in child welfare organizations across Ontario. As well, we have developed communication to sector leadership via Issue Notes, on an as-needed basis. And, in 2019, we had the first e-newsletter. The e-newsletters are now distributed across Canada monthly.

While the pathways to accessing information have expanded over the years, especially with the launch of the website in year four, we continue to respond to requests for presentations a variety of groups.

How it's going:

This year, 13 e-newsletters were distributed to **1,111 child welfare professionals** across Canada, with a low unsubscribe rate (1%).

The newly launched **CWICE.ca website also had 10,913 page views**. Top pages accessed include home page (30%), about us (11%), referrals (8%), training (7%), and resource lists (6%). While views from inside Canada represent 80%, views from USA follow with 13%, then Ukraine with 1%. The remaining views are fairly equally distributed by viewers in Germany, Poland, UK, Pakistan, South Africa, China, and India. Finally, 84% of page views were from new, unique visitors across the globe.

This year, CWICE presented to 1,872 individuals across 63 presentations. We delivered more than a two-fold increase in the number of presentations delivered, and we presented to over a thousand more individuals compared to last fiscal year. The number of requests, and our reach, clearly spotlight community-needs, especially with families as they settle in Ontario (part of our Settlement project).

In total, in our first five years (2018-2023), we presented to **6,756 individuals**.

"This conference would have been incomplete without CWICE's contributions. So many CASs and youth face complex immigration issues and yet, we don't know where to turn or how to navigate the overwhelming world of immigration and child welfare.

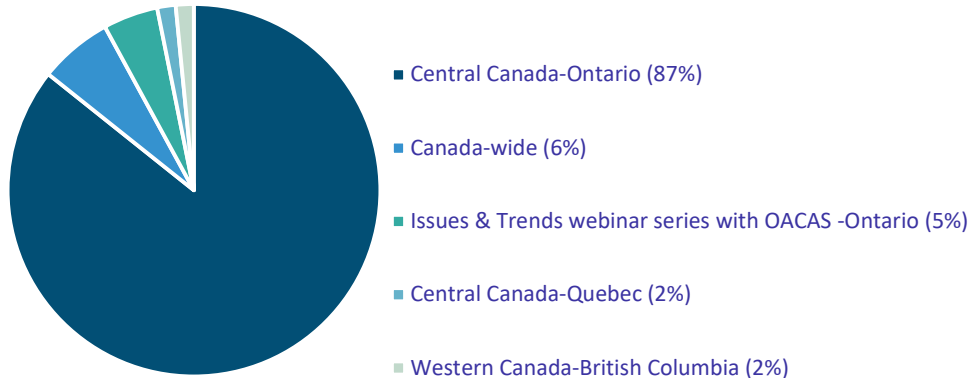
We will be better lawyers as a result and are grateful that they were willing to join us to share their knowledge and expertise."

-OCCAS Conference Co-Chair Caitlyn Symyk-Dekker



CWICE Outreach Highlights 2022/23

Outreach by Region/Area (2022/2023)
N=1,872 Individuals



Outreach survey comment highlights:

"Excellent presentation and very informative"
"We want more CWICE trainings in the future"
"Thank you for this important work and pioneering this model"



Outreach survey responses:

100% of participants agreed:
The information provided was easy to understand and helpful.
They had a better understanding of CWICE services.
They would recommend colleagues contact the CWICE for support when needed.



Outreach and Partnerships

Outreach Highlights 2022/23:

- ✓ Presenting with the Office of the Children's Lawyer and Refugee Law Office for the Ontario Bar Association
- ✓ Presenting at P2P settlement conference
- ✓ Participating on 2 panels at Canada's largest immigration conference, Metropolis, for its 25th anniversary
- ✓ Presenting twice to OUSH (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven) steering group
- ✓ Presenting to CBSA's Vulnerable Person team
- ✓ Webinars with OACAS: Afghanistan Initiative, International Social Services Canada, and Justice For Children and Youth
- ✓ Presenting at Toronto CAS' All Staff Meeting

"I have had the opportunity to work with CWICE since its inception in 2018. It fills a critical capacity-building role within the child welfare sector in cases involving children, youth, and families with unresolved immigration issues. Not only does CWICE regularly collaborate with our Office in providing direct assistance to our young clients with a view to resolving their immigration status issues, it provides much-needed guidance to child welfare agencies across the Province in their services to families who face these issues. Beyond direct service-delivery, CWICE engages in important awareness-raising and education initiatives to assist the sector in understanding the impact of unresolved immigration issues on children, youth and families and the need to address these issues proactively. CWICE also works collaboratively with governmental and non-governmental partners to develop resources and advocate for systemic improvements to address the protection and immigration needs of the families they serve. We have had the pleasure of working with the CWICE team on a number of these initiatives in the past year, including continuing education programs, as members of the Unaccompanied and Separated Children's Network, and in stakeholder meetings with government representatives. CWICE's work has contributed to improved experiences for the children, youth and families who find themselves at the challenging intersection of the child protection and immigration systems."

Caterina Tempesta, Senior Counsel, Office of the Children's Lawyer

"Many thanks to CWICE for offering virtual sessions of your *"Introduction to the Canadian Immigration System & Intersection with Child Welfare"* to members of Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services' *Child and Family Wellbeing* continuum. This training followed previously held Nova Scotia sessions which yielded positive feedback, with staff identifying their increased understanding of the complexities that *many* children, youth, and families face regarding immigration and citizenship. Training facilitators are true experts and participants shared that following the sessions they felt more prepared to meet diverse needs with an increased awareness of when they may consider resources or services that are responsive to families' immigration status and migration stories. This course highlights the linkages between immigration matters and our child and family wellbeing work, with the need to gather and consider critically important information. We look forward to future sessions."

Stacey Greenough, Manager, Child Protection and Children in Care Programs
Nova Scotia's Child and Family Wellbeing- Department of Community Services



Partnerships: A Settlement Project Story

While providing outreach presentations, CWICE Immigration Specialist Rosario Elmy observed a need in local hotels. As there continue to be many housing challenges across the GTHA, including supply and affordability, some families have stayed longer than anticipated in temporary accommodations such as hotels. Agencies operating services within hotels have adjusted, and at times needed additional programming to support families remaining for service. In fall 2022, Rosario worked with Peel Children's Aid Foundation to bring donated toys and games to several hotels.

In December 2022, a partner organization put a call out to our Peel-Halton-Toronto Regional Resettlement group as well. This specific network includes 40+ service organizations. Our partners were expecting several full airplanes arriving, carrying families who did not have winter apparel. CWICE responded immediately. In less than 24 hours, Peel CAF donated coats. Ahead of flights arriving, Rosario Elmy delivered 19 new winter coats.

***"Peel CAS had been a valuable partner of Peel Halton reception center since day one.
CWICE team provides information sessions and assistance to all our clients.
This led to have no children in care, from our clients, since we started working together in 2016."***
~Marwan Ismail, Executive Director, Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services

***"Peel Children's Aid Foundation is privileged to support the incredible work that CWICE does for so many.
The children and youth we work with deserve the same opportunities as their peers,
and it is our obligation to champion their needs.
Immigration Specialists like Rosario and her colleagues
always go the extra mile to meet the needs of the families they serve.
Peel CAF is pleased to be able to help augment the important work that they do each day."***
~Renaë Addis, Executive Director, Peel Children's Aid Foundation



Research

Since 2018, the School of Social Work at Toronto Metropolitan has had a research partnership with CWICE.

In August 2022, CWICE team members participated in the Rights For Children and Youth conference hosted by Dr. Parada and his team. Immigration Specialists Fatima Mukai and Rosario Elmy, and Data and Research Coordinator Natalia Valencia presented to academics, professionals and students working across criminal justice, immigration, and child welfare sectors.

At the end of 2022, we were in the final stages of an institutional ethnography study with Dr. Parada, and look forward to sharing the findings in the near future.

In 2021, CWICE co-managers Liz Okai and Danielle Ungara joined as Advisors for the Border(ing) Practices research project.

Border(ing) Practices is a collaboration between University of Toronto and University of Victoria. Moving into its second phase this year, researchers moved from policy analysis to interviews with professionals and ethnography observations. We invited researchers to join two CWICE training sessions as part of this year's phase.

This is a multi-year comparative study, that seeks to better “understand how immigration policies and bordering practices shape the process of assessing “risk” for child abuse and neglect for racialized immigrants in Canada” (Bordering Practices, 2022).



New Non-Direct Service Requests

These requests are in addition to the case referrals received via the centralized consultation centre.

Summary of this year's new requests:

Capacity building requests included training requests and inquiries, and requests for student placements. We received some requests for presentations which were forwarded for outreach, as well as conference invitations, and requests to present to our CWICE teams.

Requests for new service partnerships included: invitation to join mental health forum and report planning committee, TMU conference planning advisory, request to develop workshops for Global Affairs Canada consular staff, and join CBSA Interagency Working Group on Children's Issues. As well, we were invited for policy consultation with MCCSS and IRCC, and to join a luncheon hosted by the British Consulate.

Communications and Media requests included several interview requests from the media for print and radio. Communications included marketing material requested of CWICE, and the development of a communication plan for the release of a commissioned report.

In terms of **requests related to CUAET visas**, we were invited to participate in many meetings to coordinate services. We also fielded requests to share information, respond to families' needs in hotels, obtain donations for families, and review airport operations to ensure coordination of services.

New research requests included 10 requests for CWICE to participate or partner in research by 10 different groups/academic institutions. As well, there were several requests for CWICE data, and consultation provided for case management system upgrades.

All requests ranged in time taken to fulfill the request. The request to partner and submit a project proposal with JIAS Toronto for IRCC funding required the most intensive work this year and, once funded, involved 6 months of project work.

Top 5 non-direct service requests to CWICE (2022/23)

N=191

- Capacity Building & CWICE Training Program Inquiries (28%)
- New Service Partnership or Coordination Requests (27%)
- Communications & Media Requests (20%)
- Service Response Requests for CUAET Visa Holders (14%)
- New Research and Data Requests (12%)



CWICE Referrals

In 2022/23, we received **659 new referrals** for child protection and consultation requests.

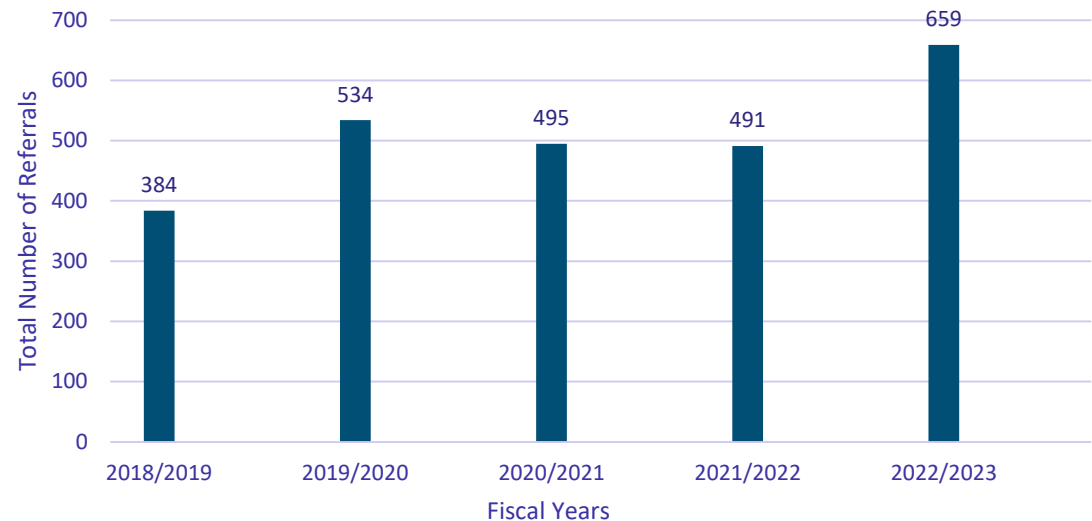
In our first five years (2018-2023), CWICE responded to **2,563 referrals**.

This 5-year period in history holds substantial change, mostly due to the 2-year pandemic. However, the volume of referrals to CWICE in 2022/23 outpaced projections based on historical referral patterns.

In the first nine months of CWICE (fiscal year 2018/19), there was an average of 42.5 referrals per month. This increased to 44.5 referrals/month the following year. Beginning in April 2020, and coinciding with the pandemic, there were two years of slight decreases, and the program received approx. 41 referrals/month.

In this current year, the fifth fiscal year, CWICE had the largest increase in referrals, with an average of 55 referrals per month.

CWICE Total Referrals by Year
(2018-2023)





Child Protection Services

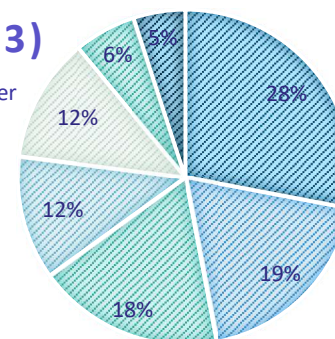
In 2022/23, we responded to **123 child protection referrals** for children, youth, and families in Peel Region. Though different individuals provided these referrals, including 8% of self-referrals, there are nine sources for referrals outlined in the chart below. Half of the child protection concerns related to separation of children and youth from parents/caregivers (28%) and caregivers experiencing problems (19%). The separation of children and youth, or risk thereof, has a notable 10% increase compared with last year.

The work of CWICE continues to be centred around the intersection of the child welfare with immigration, settlement, or border-related issues. In addition to the child welfare concerns outlined in the pie chart below, many families receiving service were also experiencing an unmet settlement need (53%). Other CWICE needs surrounded unresolved immigration status issues (25%), families requiring additional resources, representatives, referrals (12%), while 6% were cases abroad and 4% of families were facing urgent immigration status issues. We found the immigration, settlement, and border-related issues facing families were remarkably consistent with last year's findings.

Child Protection Referral Sources (2022/23) N=123	%
Law Enforcement	24
Community, Legal, Social Service Organization	23
Health/Public Health/Mental Health Provider	15.5
Educational Personnel	9
Parent / Self-Referral	8
Federal Immigration Partners	6.5
Child Welfare Service Provider (Outside Ontario)	5
Child Welfare Service Provider (Inside Ontario)	5
Community Member (Friend, Neighbour, Family Member)	4

CHILD PROTECTION REASON FOR REFERRAL 2022/23 (N=123)

- Child/Youth Separation from Parent/Caregiver
- Caregiver with a Problem/Caregiving Skills
- Harm by Omission
- Emotional Harm, Exposure to Conflict
- Request for Assistance and Consultation
- Request Counselling
- Physical and Sexual Harm by Commission

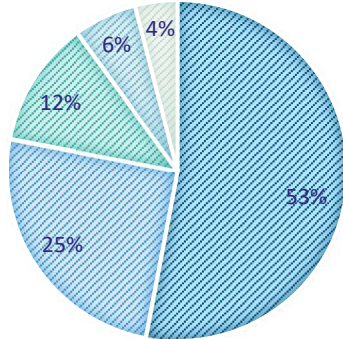




Child Protection Service Recipients

As stated, this year we responded to 123 child protection referrals and **provided service to 348 individuals** in Peel Region. As outlined in the pie chart below, our clients have a range of personal and identity-related needs.

**TYPE OF CWICE SERVICE NEED
2022/23 (N=123)**



- Unmet Settlement Need
- Unresolved Immigration Status Issue
- Resources, Representatives & Referrals
- Cases Abroad
- Urgent immigration status issue

As we've noted in previous years, our clients have a variety of immigration status in Canada. This year, 83% of our clients identified as non-Canadian citizens. The top three immigration status of our child protection clients were: Asylum Seekers (28%) which was up from 20% last year; Permanent Residents (18%) which was down from 27% last year), and Canadian Citizens (17%), down from 25% last year.

Immigration Status at Child Protection Referral	#	%
Refugee Claimant (Asylum Seeker)	99	28%
Permanent Resident	62	18%
Canadian Citizen	60	17%
No Status (Foreign National)	35	10%
Temporary Resident Permit	19	5%
Convention Refugee	16	5%
Temporary Resident - Visitor Visa	16	5%
Temporary Resident - Student Visa	12	3%
Unable to verify	9	3%
Denied Refugee Claimant	9	3%
Temporary Resident - Work Permit	7	2%
Not currently in Canada or left Canada	4	1%
Total	348	100%



Child Protection Success Stories

Success Story

By Mandisa Sifelani, Immigration Specialist

Jessica*, a Canadian born youth, was safely repatriated to Canada, after living abroad with her mother. Jessica reported that she was very stressed with the situation she was in, due to physical abuse by her mother and living in a country where she did not speak the local language. Due to not feeling safe, Jessica ran away from home. With the assistance of a community member, Jessica was taken to the local police station to report the abuse from her mother. Local police placed Jessica in a safe house and connected with the Canadian embassy. Jessica faced challenges while staying in the safe house, because she did not have a phone to contact her father back in Canada. In addition, she felt lonely, was not accustomed to the food provided to her, and when she did receive phone calls the calls were monitored and only lasted a few minutes. Jessica did not have identity documents in her possession, and her mother refused to provide them. CWICE worked alongside federal partners to obtain emergency travel documentation for Jessica and complete an assessment with family members in Canada prior to Jessica's return. This meant she would experience a smooth transition back, and that her family members in Canada had the adequate and appropriate resources in their jurisdiction to support Jessica.

In collaboration with Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Jessica's paternal family, and local authorities in the other country, Jessica was able to return home to Canada and into the care of her father and paternal grandmother. I attended Toronto Pearson International Airport, with Jessica's father and paternal grandmother, to welcome Jessica back home. I'm glad to share Jessica has been able to settle safely back into life in Canada, and she is happy to be reunited with her father and grandmother.

*Name changed to protect confidentiality

Success Story

By Yvonne Dewornu-Keys, Immigration Specialist

One evening last fall, a mother and her four children were expected to arrive at the airport, enroute to another region. Our CWICE colleagues Gillian Tennyson and Abimbola "Abby" Fajobi went to the airport to receive the family after hours. They provided the mother and children warm clothing and toys, with the help of Peel CAF. They ensured the family's safety before helping them to a hotel to rest for the evening. It did not end there, because in the morning my colleagues Mandisa Sifelani and Roya Nang took over by picking up the family of five and helping them to the train station. There were a number of complexities, involving national, international, and interjurisdictional agencies, though we were able to complete intensive pre-arrival coordination in a very short period of time. This was possible because of our amazing colleagues at Peel CAS from the screening team to facilities team, who equipped us with car seats and van, to the exceptional leadership of Liz Okai, coordination assistance of Mohamed Shaw, and collaboration with federal partners, local child welfare agency, and Peel CAF. This was **Excellence in Action** and **collaboration** at its best, or just another night at CWICE!

Province-wide Consultations

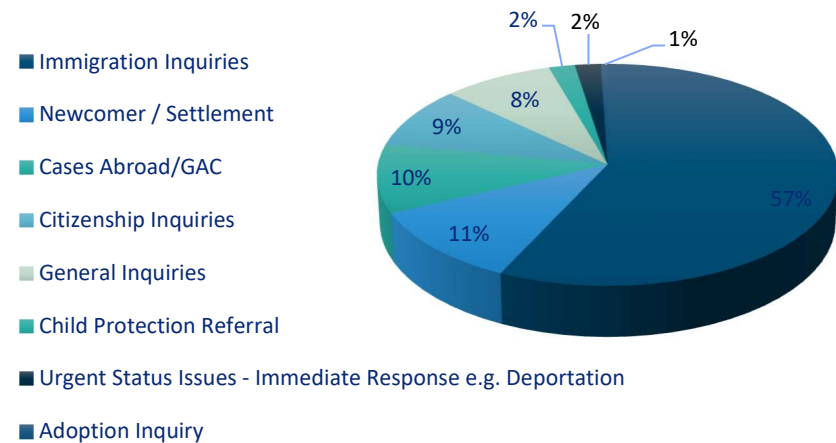
This year, we had 75 unique referral sources providing 536 referrals to the province-wide consultation centre. Of these referrals, twenty-seven Children's Aid Societies across Ontario made 68% (363) of the total referrals. There are currently fifty child welfare organizations across Ontario, including Indigenous Wellbeing Agencies.

While 70% of referrals were from child welfare professionals in Ontario, across Canada and around the world, the needs varied for children and youth.

The top three identified reasons for referrals include: Immigration Inquiries (57%), Newcomer/Settlement Needs (11%), and Cases Abroad (10%).

Overall, the program saw a 29% increase in referrals this year.

Province-wide Consultation Referral by Type (2022/2023) N=536



	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Province-wide consultation requests	194*	269	313	386	536
Percentage change		↑ 28%	↑ 14%	↑ 19%	↑ 29%

*Data collection period ranged from CWICE launch mid-June 2018-March 2019



Province-wide Services & Evaluation

This year, our Immigration Specialists **provided 294 brief services impacting 569 individuals**. Brief services are provided following consultation if it is determined that there is a need for follow-up. These may include supporting unaccompanied children, referrals for families wishing to verify or resolve their immigration status issues, or assisting a youth obtain PR card renewal or achieve citizenship.

We evaluate our services annually, and review feedback from individuals once we close services. This year we closed 132 services and had 32% response rate. All respondents shared the CWICE Immigration Specialists were knowledgeable managing their request and the CWICE services were helpful (100%). As well, 98% of respondents would recommend CWICE to a colleague, and 95% felt the CWICE team managed requests in a timely manner. Our respondents were predominantly child welfare professionals (76%), followed by children, youth, and families (21%), and other community professionals (2%).

Comments from clients:

"The CWICE services helped to keep my child and me in Canada together. Because of the help I received from the CWICE program, I am now a permanent resident of Canada"

"We are working on getting status in Canada, which is now in progress. Very thankful"

"Fatima Mukai [Immigration Specialist] single handedly helped us complete forms and apply for the citizenship for my grandson. Her advice and guidance throughout the year has been without doubt a life changer for our family. Thank you Fatima"

"Thomas was wonderful. He [Thomas Abraham, Immigration Specialist] was patient and knowledgeable about citizenship and helped me complete the paperwork"

Comments from professionals:

"CWICE was such a critical factor in the youth's life, not only in securing immigration matters but also played a crucial role in permanency regarding housing. Without CWICE, the housing connection may not have happened, and this youth's life could continue to be unstable"

"CWICE is playing an amazing role. My association with CWICE has always been an enriching experience for the family we supported, and we value the protection work. The CWICE workers were very compassionate, able to identify with the struggles of the families, and willing to support them unconditionally"

"CWICE is invaluable. Your knowledge and care of children without status are remarkable. You are so helpful in assisting us in working through complicated situations with the end goal of citizenship for children-in-care"



Brief Services: Service Recipients

In 2022/23, 75% of those we provided service to did not identify as Canadian citizens. Our clients are diverse and hold a variety of immigration status and needs when we work with them as outlined on the chart below.

IMPACT: A client's perspective

CWICE team members often create meaningful and respectful relationships with clients, who keep us informed of their later successes.

The email excerpt below is one of the many examples:

"Hi Alicja,

I hope you are keeping well! We are doing fine too and I really wanted to express **my sincere appreciation** for your support and advice with our PR application and for listening when I needed someone to validate our experiences. Letting you know that it meant a lot to us/me.

The good news is that we finally got our PR confirmation and that is **a great step for us to feel more at home here in Canada**. Thank you for being there for us when it all seemed quite blurry and nothing was clear to us! Thanks again!"

*Email from a former client to Alicja Grabarczyk, Immigration Specialist

The top five immigration status of our clients at the time of service are: Canadian Citizen (25%), Permanent Resident (25%), No Immigration Status (11%), Asylum Seeker (9%), and Denied Refugee Claimant (8%).

In terms of notable changes, we had fewer Permanent Resident clients this year (down from 31% last year) and more clients with no status (up from 6%). This is substantial given we provided service to nearly 200 more clients this year than last year.

Immigration Status - Brief Service at Referral	#	%
Canadian Citizen	145	25%
Permanent Resident	141	25%
No Status (Foreign National)	62	11%
Refugee Claimant (Asylum Seeker)	51	9%
Denied Refugee Claimant	47	8%
Temporary Resident - Visitor Visa	38	7%
Convention Refugee	25	4%
Temporary Resident - Work Permit	23	4%
Information Unknown	19	3%
Temporary Resident - Student Visa	12	2%
Protected Person	2	0%
Not in Canada/Left Canada	2	0%
Temporary Resident Permit	2	0%
Total	569	100%



Brief Services Success Stories

Success Story

By Celistine Frampton, Immigration Specialist

We were asked to support two siblings in out-of-home care, applying for Canadian citizenship. Initially, their parents withheld their identity documents. It took months of planning before the siblings obtained health cards. After reaching out to one parent abroad, we obtained their birth certificates. Taken together with their health cards, we could proceed with applying for citizenship. Given the siblings' ages, they were approaching 18, we were racing against time. Shortly before the siblings turned 18, we successfully submitted their application for citizenship which is currently being processed by IRCC Liaison. We are fortunate to have this partnership. In the meantime, the parent in Canada did eventually provide the youth with their other IDs so we've added them to their application. While we are waiting for the final approval, we wish to acknowledge our successes along the pathway to citizenship as this took many months to get this far.

Success Story

By Claudia Obreque, Immigration Specialist

I worked with a mother this year, who was a denied refugee claimant under a removal order. Her child is a Canadian citizen and she had been contacted by CBSA to start her removal process from Canada. The mother was hospitalized, due to a high degree of stress and fear of returning to a country where she did not feel safe. For various reasons, and for a long time, she was not connected to the right supports. Her child welfare worker referred her to CWICE, and I connected her with our partners at Legal Aid Ontario. She was able to obtain a legal aid certificate and was referred to an immigration lawyer. Her lawyer was really invested in helping this mother with her immigration issues. A previous Permanent Residency application on humanitarian and compassionate (H&C) grounds was updated, highlighting the best interest of this child. As well, this mother's lawyer explained this woman's ties and establishment in Canada, and her important contribution to the health care system during the pandemic. The mother's immigration lawyer was able to obtain a stay of removal, and shortly after that her PR application on H&C grounds was approved in principle. This mother went from almost being deported from Canada, to gaining approval of her application towards permanent residence status in Canada. This case shows the importance of engaging and connecting with clients, working together and collaboration between sectors to ensure clients have explored all possibilities, pathways, and reach the outcomes they are striving for.

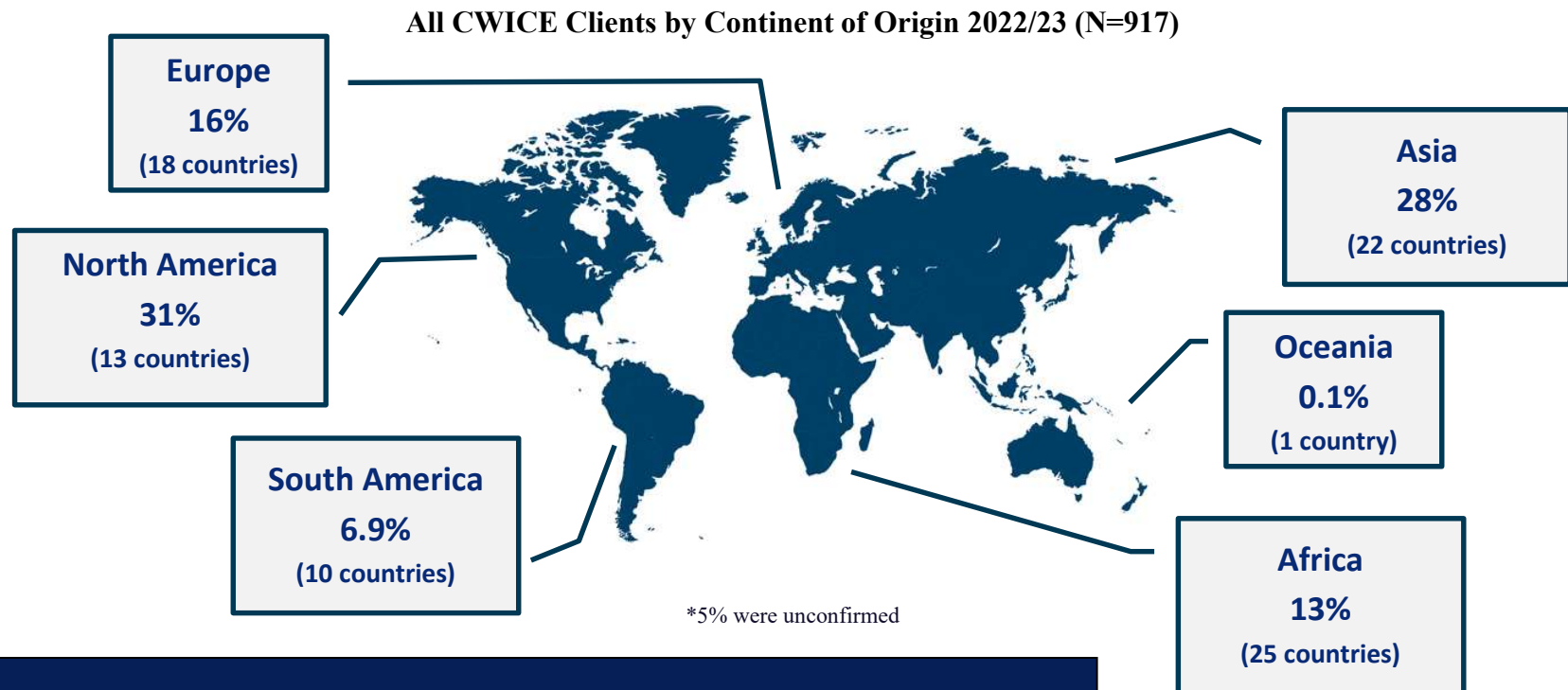


All Services

Service to clients with distinct, diverse, and intersectional identities

Our clients have unique and intersectional identities, beyond immigration status in Canada. Through the years, we've reported on the continent of origin for the individuals who have received either direct-service child protection services in Peel Region or brief service through the province-wide consultation centre. Across these service types, **this year the entire Centre of Excellence team served 917 individuals**. This is substantially higher clientele, in comparison to just over 650 individuals.

According to the United Nations, there are 195 nations worldwide. This year, our clients were connected to **a record-breaking 89 countries** around the globe. CWICE service recipients are connected to nearly half of all countries globally, and they are **connected to 6 continents of origin** for the first time. In 2020/21 our clients were connected to 76 countries of origin across 5 continents, and 82 countries across 5 continents in 2021/22.

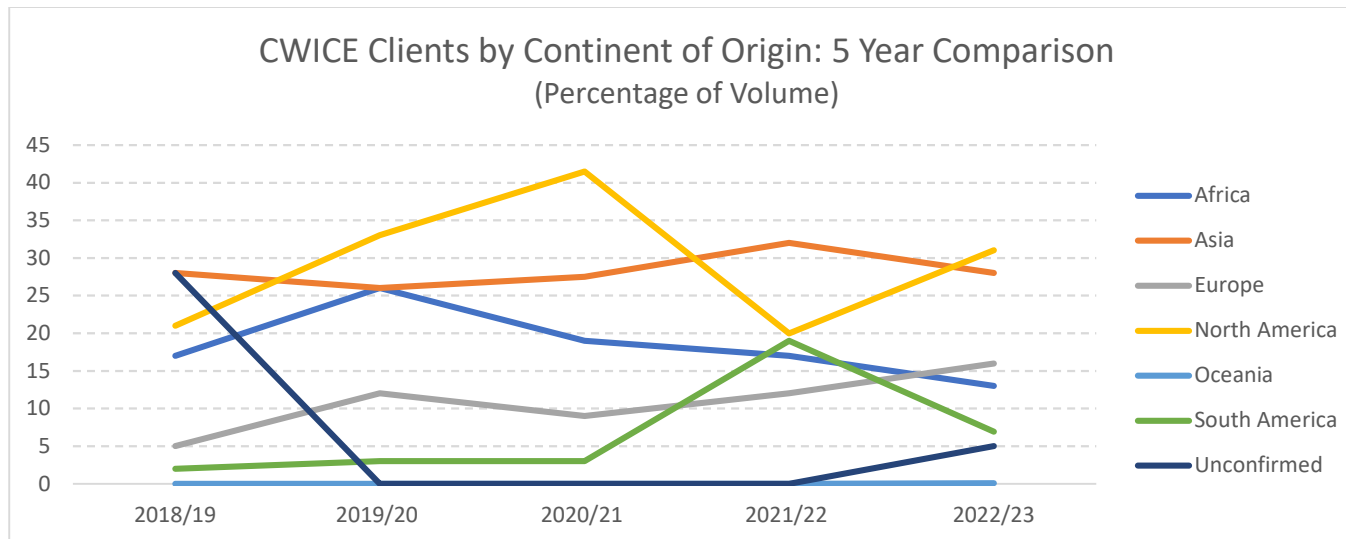




Our Clients Across 5 Years:

Service to clients with distinct, diverse, and intersectional identities

Over these five years, we have worked to better understand our clients' identities and needs. While gathering this data is important, we've provided leadership on transparently reporting this data in an effort to fill a gap in dis-aggregated child welfare data and research available on the intersection between child welfare, and immigration, settlement, and border-related issues. While we continue to assess data over the next five years, and likely beyond, we wish to report a 5-year snapshot of our service recipients. Throughout most years, the majority of our clients were connected to Asia or North America as their continent of origin. We have always interpreted this data through the lens of geography related to Canada's borders, immigration statistics nationally, and global migration trends. For example, migration patterns typically involve migration within regions, which may explain our clients who are connected to North America. As well, CWICE supports Canadian citizens, including those repatriating or children being placed abroad. National statistics are relevant, because Ontario continues to settle about half of all newcomers arriving to the country. And lastly, in terms of global trends, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on migration. However, it may take some time to fully understand the impact in Canada. For now, we know CWICE data contributes to a first-ever baseline of identity data related to child welfare and immigration/settlement/borders. While not generalizable, as CWICE depends on the referrals it receives, it is possible individuals and families eligible for service are not referred to CWICE. Over the future years, we will continue to promote data reporting across the child welfare sector and remain available to assist organizations in their efforts to understand the identity needs of their clients.



UASC Project

“A trusted partnership requires a foundation of shared values, mutual respect, and clarity of roles. These elements allow all parties to bring forth their best ideas and encourage the best in each other.

JIAS Toronto collaborated with the incredible CWICE team to do a national study reviewing unaccompanied and separated minors. What began as a new relationship between these two organizations quickly evolved into a trusted partnership.

Our final deliverable was a comprehensive report that represented inclusive community engagement, meaningful insights, pragmatic next steps, and clarity on what is a complex and interconnected topic.

While the report was produced in a condensed timeframe, its impact on how the sector takes into consideration the unique needs of unaccompanied minors will be long lasting”

**Elise Herzig, Executive Director
JIAS Toronto**

In 2022, CWICE and JIAS Toronto were commissioned, and funded, by IRCC to study and make recommendations on how Canada could better support Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) with CUAET (Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel) visas and more broadly.

The final report was submitted to IRCC in December 2022. The recommendations were presented at Metropolis Conference in March 2023 and the report then released more widely.

The full report is available here:

[Unaccompanied and Separated Children under CUAET: A call to position Canada as Best in Class Leader in the protection and welfare of children and youth.](#)

“CBSA Greater Toronto Area Region partners with CWICE’s on immigration and settlement issues involving children. The CBSA works closely with CWICE when an unaccompanied minor arrives at a port-of-entry in Mississauga. This ongoing relationship supports refugee and migrant children who are going through the immigration, legal and social services systems in Ontario”

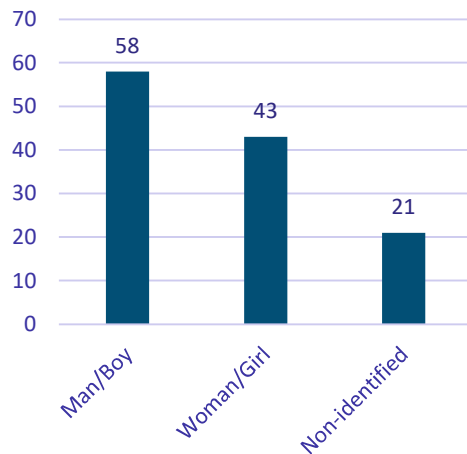
-Canada Border Services Agency

UASC Highlights 2022/23

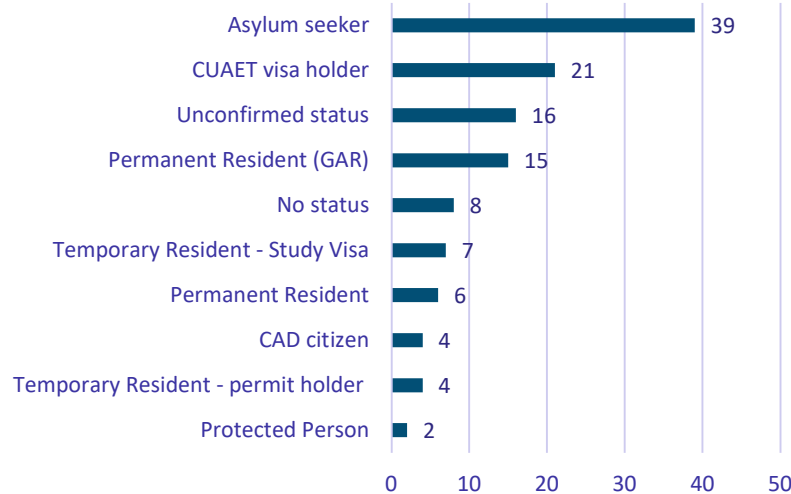
This year we responded to requests for service for **122 Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC)**. Our average, over the last three years, is approximately 50 referrals a year. This year's number of referrals demonstrate a significant finding as the number has more than doubled.

Through the IRCC-commissioned study this year, we were able to hold five focus groups, obtain written submissions, present the draft report for further consultation over an additional two month period, before finalizing the recommendations for a national framework to support unaccompanied and separated children. When we examine the personal identity attributes of the children and youth referred this year, we understand more about the volume increase. The majority of referrals were for men/boys, however several children/youth's gender identity was not-identified (17%) during referrals which is a significant increase from last year which was 2% not identified. This year, for the first time, we are reporting UASC by Immigration Status as this was highlighted as an issue within the Study and report. Thirty-two (32%) UASC referred are seeking asylum and the next largest group is, notably, CUAET visa holders (17%). Over 10% of those referred have unconfirmed immigration status, supporting the need (outlined in the report) for accurate data to understand UASC's needs thoroughly.

UASC 2022/23 by
Self-Identified Gender
(N=122)



UASC 2022/23 by Immigration Status
(N=122)



Finally, the more than doubling of referrals this year means **since CWICE launched in 2018, we've received 306 referrals for UASC**. Of course, many continue to believe that these numbers are under-reported as no data strategy exists to capture all UASC in Canada. In part, this is due to the absence of national protocols, shared definitions, coordinated processes and services, tracking/data management, and cross-sector training. These items are outlined in the findings of the report. It is hoped that a national framework provides safe, secure, equitable and rights-based services for children and youth while they remain separated from their parents/caregivers and families.

UASC Referrals	
Year	# Referrals
2018/19	38
2019/20	45
2020/21	47
2021/22	54
2022/23	122
Total	306

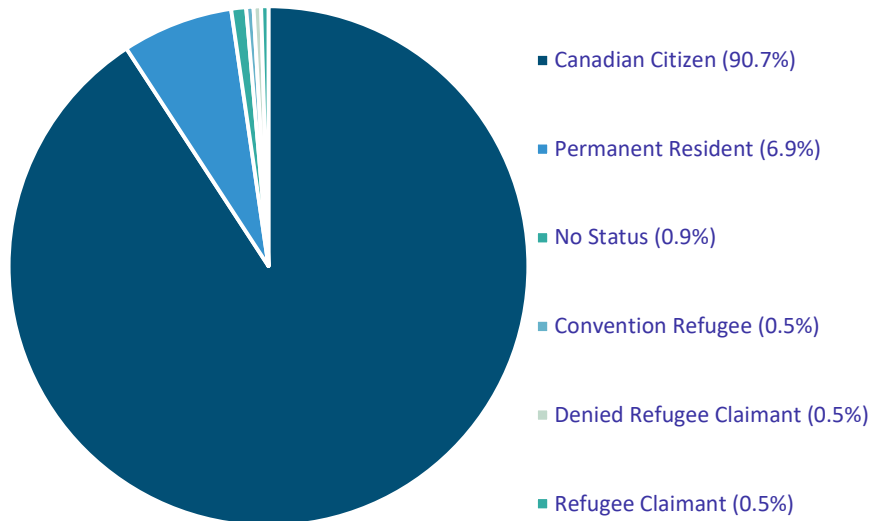


Immigration Status Project

Compiled by: Celistine Frampton and Fatima Mukai, Immigration Specialists & Project Leads

Our 2022/23 point-in-time manual analysis, which is part of the Status Project, confirms that Peel CAS child welfare workers are aware of, and continue to plan for permanent status for all children and youth in out-of-home placements. This is demonstrated by the drop in the number of children identified as having no immigration status in Canada from 2.5% (reported in our 2021/22 annual report) to less than 1% in the current report. Over 90% of the children, youth, and young adults supported are Canadian citizens.

Immigration Status of Children & Youth
in out-of-home care including VYSA and CCSY
Peel CAS (December 2nd, 2022)
N=217

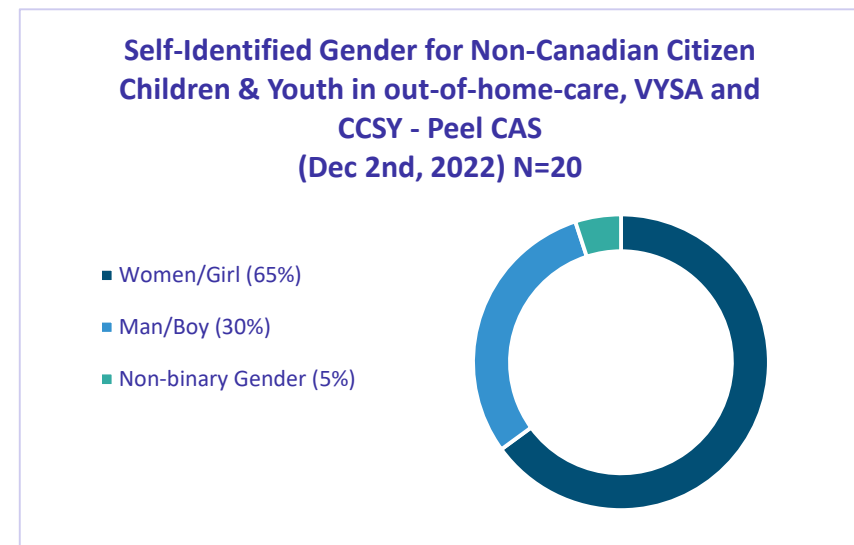
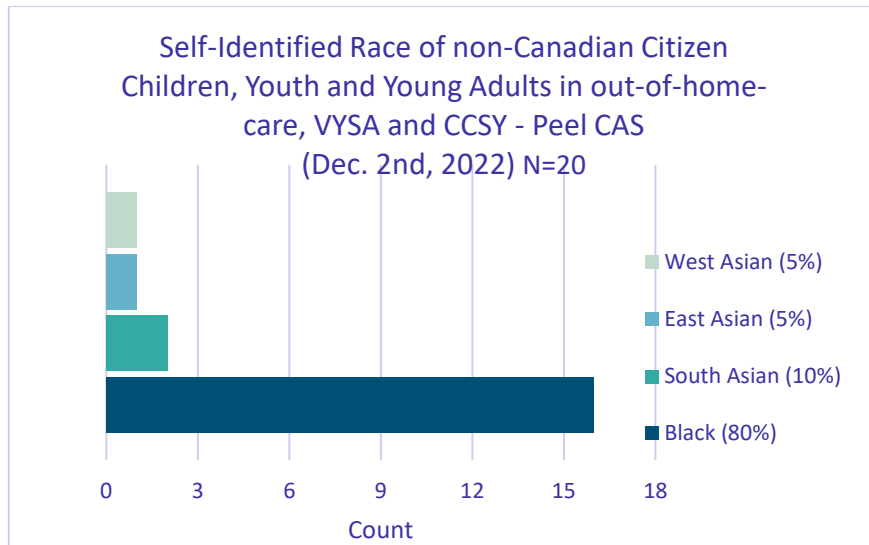


In the Region of Peel, such data informs the basis of our immigration status project, as we capture a point-in time snapshot to address the future immigration needs of children and youth. This part of permanency planning contributes to reunification plans and kinship family finding or even placements abroad.

At the time of this project, in December 2022, we identified additionally that all fifty (50) children and youth residing in kinship service placements with Peel CAS are Canadian citizens. This represents a steady year-over-year increase in the number of children and youth, with full permanency in Canada, while receiving kinship services. CWICE continues to make strides to ensure that every child and youth in out-of-home care, who have unresolved immigration status issues have a plan and pathway to resolve these issues.

With the assistance of our colleagues at Peel CAS, CWICE gathered information related to each child/youth's immigration status in Canada, including place of birth and other identity factors such as race and self-

identified gender. Of the 20 children, youth, and young adults identified to not have Canadian citizenship yet, 80% of identified as Black, while 65% identified as women/girls, 30% as men/boys, and 5% identified as non-binary. The data collected this year provide child welfare workers at Peel CAS a better understanding of some of the intersecting needs faced by the children, youth and families we serve.



In anticipation of the Child Welfare Redesign in Ontario, and new regulations beginning in July 2023, our colleagues across the sector are encouraged to continue to document identity-based data, including place of birth, immigration status in Canada, and citizenship accurately. The future of child welfare in Ontario will include child welfare workers obtaining identity documents for all children and youth in out-of-home care, which we see as a crucial part in addressing unresolved immigration issues.



Settlement Project

A key change this year was the expansion of the Afghan Initiative, and creation of the new Settlement Project. The project work involved attending several cross-sector and multi-jurisdiction planning tables, as well as connecting with many individuals and families settling in Ontario through the outreach program. As the number of people arriving in Ontario increased this year, we delivered 28 presentations to families within their first weeks settling in temporary hotel lodging. This included families from Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as individuals/families from many other countries,

Key Highlights:

- ✓ CWICE continued to be a member of the Service Delivery Network (SDN) in Peel Region. SDN members also include:
 - Caledon Community Services (Bolton and Caledon)
 - Punjabi Community Health Services (Brampton)
 - Peel Multicultural Council (Meadowvale/Mississauga)
 - Malton Neighbourhood Services (Malton/Mississauga)
 - Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services (Mississauga)
 - CWICE (Ontario-wide; joined in 2014)
 - Indus Community Services (joined in 2021)
- ✓ CWICE continues to be a member of the Regional Resettlement group, along with 40+ service organization members across Halton-Peel-Toronto regions.
- ✓ CWICE attended several Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) meetings. Managers of CWICE presented twice this year.
- ✓ CWICE attends the City of Toronto's Inter-Agency Task Force meetings regarding Ukrainian Arrivals. Many organizations across the GTHA, as well as provincial and federal government partners attend these meetings and CWICE presented once this year.
- ✓ CWICE Manager Danielle Ungara joined Peel Newcomer Strategy Group's Mental Health Report and Forum planning committee. The goal is to bridge and coordinate mental health services across Peel Region.



Citizenship Project

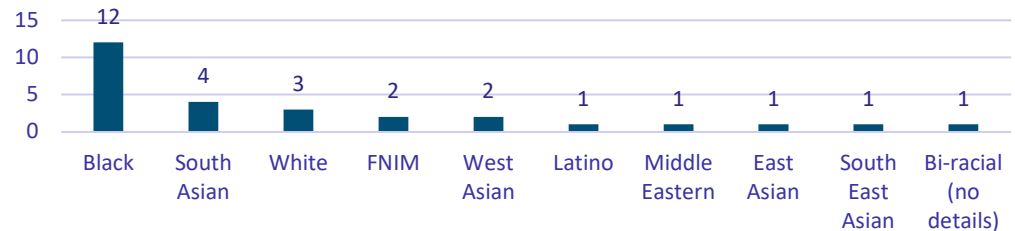
Compiled by: Abimbola Oyeyinka and Abimbola Fajobi, Immigration Specialists & Project Leads

In 2022-2023, CWICE received 28 new citizenship referrals from across the province. Of the 28 referrals, 65% were for citizenship applications for individuals under 18 years old. While two individuals were over 24 years of age, eight individuals requesting service are between 18-22 years old. This means 35% of request were to support adults applying for citizenship, which requires the writing of a citizenship test.

The individuals supported are diverse, with 57% self-identified as women/girls and 43% self-identified as men/boys. While we receive requests from across the province, the clients' identities are distinct, including their identified race, as outlined in the chart.

The CWICE Citizenship project continues to support minors, youth, young adults, and those who were formerly involved with agencies across Ontario. Some of these referrals are received from the Children's Aid Societies, while others were received from individuals who needed support in navigating their Citizenship process. Since the Pandemic, some individuals have completed their Citizenship Oath virtually while others completed it in person. For individuals who completed their Oath Ceremony virtually, their Citizenship Certificate was mailed to them within a few short weeks of the ceremony.

Citizenship Requests by Race 2022/23
(N=28)



Citizenship Story:

On a Friday afternoon, Alicja Grabarczyk was notified a youth we previously worked with was scheduled to attend the next morning (Saturday) for her virtual citizenship ceremony. IRCC requested CWICE staff be in attendance. This was for a 17-year-old, who no longer had a child welfare worker involved. So, on Saturday morning, CWICE's Rosario Elmy joined the virtual oath ceremony. After a clerk verified the youth's identity in breakout room (to maintain confidentiality), the ceremony moved forward with 50 participants receiving citizenship. Rosario shared Honourable Justice Albert Wong met with them in a private, and said he was happy CWICE was present and he asked her to tell the team know he thanks us for the work we do. I've been to a citizenship oath ceremony in-person, and it will remain one of the most moving experiences of my life. Rosario shared this was a great experience that reminded her of the important work we do and she inspired the team by saying "let's keep up the great work we do!"

~Danielle Ungara



In our first five years of CWICE, we have now responded to a total of 170 requests to support individuals seeking Canadian citizenship. We could not have done this without the citizenship act amendments in 2017, making it possible for children to be sole applicants for citizenship. This was an important step in recognizing the voice of the child and has helped us help these 170 individuals over the years.

Many thanks to all of the champions who paved the way for us, including Senator Victor Oh from Peel Region. We are proud of the strong relationships we've built and thank Senator Oh and his team for visiting our team earlier this year in follow up.



Senator Victor Oh visiting Peel CAS' CWICE, March 6, 2023

The Impact of Citizenship: A Success Story

By Fatima Mukai, Immigration Specialist

Excerpts from publication: [Planning a Future: What Does it Take? \(cwice.ca\)](https://cwice.ca/Planning-a-Future-What-Does-it-Take?)

The mood of excitement was hard not to miss, as “D” received his citizenship certificate. The Oath of Citizenship ceremony ushered a new beginning for this young man. D would now be able to plan for the future and feel truly included in a society that, until now, had denied him so much. Last year, I outlined the missed opportunities for a young man we are calling D, to protect his privacy and confidentiality. (See related article: [CWICE Offers New Possibilities after Missed Opportunities](#)). D arrived in Canada as a Permanent Resident in the summer of 1999 and spent his Canadian childhood in the extended society care of an Ontario child welfare agency.

When asked what the first thing he would do with his new Canadian citizenship, D replied, with a broad smile:

“I can finally make plans for the future and feel secure. I can even have a Canadian passport and plan a trip outside of the country with my child! I can visit my mother, for the first time since I arrived in Canada!”

As we continue to navigate and provide support so individuals receiving child welfare services can access citizenship, we recognize there remain a wide variety of challenges that create barriers, inaccessibility, and inequity in outcomes to some requests received. We continue to work with legal and immigration partners to ensure we're removing barriers for children and youth who wish to become citizens.



Conclusion

This report highlights key data, but it is the people, feedback, and stories behind the numbers that provide a greater appreciation and understanding of the work of CWICE. It is the positive impact this past year, and the four years before, that resonate for us these days. From the sound of a ringing bell when we've achieved a positive outcome with a client, to the goosebumps we feel when a young person takes their citizenship oath, or the sense of accomplishment when a cohort completes CWICE 101-108. And, to all the moments in between. On behalf of CWICE, we wish to thank you for your continued support of the Centre of Excellence. We are stronger because of it.

In terms of the immediate future, new child welfare regulations are coming into effect in July 2023. While these are positive, promising, and will have important impact in the lives of children, we understand that change requires support. We are here to help child welfare organizations implement strategies and practices to uphold the regulations. For specific assistance from CWICE, please refer to appendix B.

In this upcoming year, we remain committed to the children, youth, caregivers, and professionals we interact with. Our teams will continue to evaluate needs, innovate our programming, and build new partnerships. We will continue to contribute to knowledge creation for our sector and beyond. As a sector, we continue towards child welfare redesign, and CWICE will continue to reimagine the role child welfare plays in the lives of families. This means bridging gaps and leadership to ensure our sector is accountable to the children and youth we serve.

We hope you'll join our ever-growing community of ambassadors in this work. We will certainly need you in the next five years! Given all that has happened in our first five years, we will give our team members the final word. Here are their thoughts and reflections about what it means to reach 5 years and to celebrate all that has already been achieved!

~ Danielle Ungara



CWICE Reflections on 5th Anniversary

"5 years of dedication, collaboration, accountability, continued support and advocacy, research and teaching and growth and success!"

I am proud to be part of CWICE for what it stands for, what it has achieved, and for where it will go in the future!"

– **Roya Nang, Immigration Specialist**
(Provides service in English, German, Dari and Pashto)

"As an Immigration Specialist and as someone who has had to personally navigate the immigration system, I immediately saw the benefits of the Centre. The positive impacts it has had on individuals' lives, as well as the opportunity to help make a difference. When I started in 2018, CWICE was in its first year, I made it my mission to inform as many people as possible about what we do. For some, it was about letting them know the Centre exists and for others it was assisting them with navigating the immigration system and many more. Its something I wish was available to me many years ago when I came to Canada as a youth."

– **Celistine Frampton, Immigration Specialist**
(Provides service in English and Creole)

"It is exciting and inspiring working in CWICE"

– **Yvonne Dewornu-Keys, Immigration Specialist**
(Provides service in English, Ewe, and Twi)



Celebrating 5 years of CWICE!

"In these five years, I had the opportunity to develop the CWICE Certificate Program curriculum and I have consistently hear from training participants that the program is important new knowledge for all child welfare professionals. Through training, we are raising awareness and making a difference in people's lives and the child welfare sector. I am very proud of being part of these changes and being part of CWICE.

There is no better feeling than knowing that I was able to be part of a team to resolve the immigration status issues for a child in out-of-home-care or being able to connect a family with the right resources to address these issues. CWICE recognizes the importance of integrating settlement and immigration status issues in case planning. Through our work, we are always educating child welfare professionals, we highlight prevention, building therapeutic alliances with our clients and addressing the issues that impact their lives"

– **Claudia Obreque, Immigration Specialist**
(Provides service in English and Spanish)

"It has been a privilege to be a part of CWICE and seeing the growth and innovation within the last 5 years. I feel we have an amazing and dedicated team of colleagues that move forward, works hard, continues to learn, and simply loves the work.

Even though 5 years might not seem like a long time, CWICE just blossomed at an accelerated rate.

We have a lot to be proud of and it will be beautiful to see what the next 5 years brings"

– **Alicja Grabarczyk, Immigration Specialist**
(Provides service in English and Polish)



CWICE Reflections on 5th Anniversary

"My 5 years with CWICE can be described as very fulfilling, as I put all my skills, accumulated through a lifetime, to work in the benefit of others. My works gives me a sense of accomplishment every day, be it through my colleagues' achievements, or my client's successes"

-Fatima Mukai, Immigration Specialist
(Provides service in English and Portuguese)

"CWICE has seen and experienced some great successes, with the work we accomplished with JIAS Toronto and IRCC on the CUAET project, attending and presenting at the 25th Metropolis Canada Conference in Ottawa.

The Centre's growth has been limitless.

I am anticipating new and amazing work from the CWICE, in collaboration with other community partners, and the work we do for children, youth and families we serve"

– Mandisa Sifelani, Immigration Specialist
(Provides service in English, Ndebele, Shona and Zulu)



"Being part of CWICE is an honor and privilege. When I think about CWICE, I think of stability, permanency, and groundbreaking think-tank. I am always proud to say our team is the first of its kind Canada-wide"

– Abimbola Fajobi, Immigration Specialist
(Provides service in English and Yoruba).

"When I think of CWICE, I think of permanency, stability, hope, journey, together, walking side-by-side. Proud Moments, when client calls us first When they're getting positive outcome at their Hearing, and when these teens get accepted to university"

-Gillian Tennyson, Child Protection Worker
(Provides service in English and Gaelic)

"I am very happy to be part of a dynamic team, who looks out for marginalized people. We strive to make sure that barriers are removed from people's path and we support them in fulfilling their destiny."

– Abimbola Oyeyinka, Immigration Specialist
(Provides service in English and Yoruba)



"I have passion for working with children and am proud to be part of CWICE for the past five years. CWICE is committed to continuous learning and development of Immigration and settlement issues, to provide the best possible service to children, youth and families who are involved with the Society and facing these challenges. As an immigrant myself, I am aware of some the challenges facing children, youth and families who are new to Canada".

-Mohamed Shaw, Child Protection Worker
(Provides service in English and Fulani)

"I feel working with the CWICE supportive team encourages ideas to sprout any initiatives to address or prevent children against risk and ensure no child falls out of the community's safety net, which undoubtedly contributes to our success as a team and improves the youth's life!!"

-Ghezal Wallid, Data & Research Coordinator
(Fluent in English, Farsi, Pashto, and Korean)



"As an Immigration Specialist, I have had the opportunity to work with many unresolved immigration status cases over the last few years. One of which involved a young child, and I was able to assist her obtain permanent resident status. Seeing the reaction on this young child's face was one of the most impactful experiences I've had as a worker. There are no words that can truly capture the moment, but I will say that seeing the joy this child expressed reminded me how important the work we do is. The impact that our work has on a person's life is tremendous, and I am so grateful for that"

- Rosario Elmy, Immigration Specialist
(Provides service in English and Spanish)

"I am an immigrant to Canada and as an immigrant in Canada, I have the first hand experience regarding challenges faced by economic immigrants. I can imagine the challenges faced by people with precarious immigration status in the country.

The layers of vulnerabilities lead to exploitation, as many people fear the system and are not able to report abuses they suffer. I am happy to be part of CWICE, a group that works towards raising awareness regarding intersectionality of precarious immigration status issues and child welfare involvement. I joined CWICE last year and the onboarding was easy as CWICE colleagues are very supportive and knowledgeable"

-Thomas Abraham, Immigration Specialist
(Provides service in English, Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, and Italian).

CWICE Reflections on 5th Anniversary

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Appendix A:

CWICE Training Evaluation Feedback

To measure the effectiveness of the training, all CWICE trainings have a pre and post knowledge test and training evaluation. Training participants rated the trainings through four Likert scaling questions and two open-ended questions for evaluation purposes, including:

- a) What did you learn in the training that you would implement in your practice, and
- b) Please share any additional feedback.

CWICE 101: Introduction of the Canadian Immigration System & Intersection with Child Welfare (Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Danielle Ungara)

- a) *"Everything!!! I truly did not know any of this information so even being aware of it and knowing which direction to turn when I am faced with navigating these system(s) on behalf of children and families".*
- b) *"It was a great learning opportunity"; "Excellent training"; "I found this material, although very complex, to be presented so well and with so much knowledge".*

CWICE 102: Refugees Part 1: Asylum Seekers & Denied Claimants (Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Danielle Ungara)

- a) *Understanding that my work/resource could be representing the agent of their oppression. Understanding that they need to be comfortable enough to share their experiences with me".*
- b) *"Presentation was great and information is very applicable to my work"; "Thank you for this vital training"; "I found the case examples helpful in learning how the information provided relates to child welfare practice".*

CWICE 103: Refugees Part 2: Unaccompanied and Separated Children (Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Mandisa Sifelani)

- a) *"I have a better understanding of the process for UASC in the child welfare system, and what role we play in assisting these children"; "Engagement with families and importance of collaborative work".*
- b) *"Excellent training"; "I really like the case examples that were provided".*

CWICE 104: Humanitarian & Compassionate Grounds Applications for Permanent Residence (Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Fatima Mukai)

- a) *"This was a great training. It was a lot of information to digest, as much of the information was new to me, primarily the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and how this intersects with child welfare".*
- b) *"Really enjoyed the different cases as it helps to understand the complexities and how all cases are different".*

CWICE 105: Refugees Part 3: GARs and Privately Sponsored Refugees
(Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Rosario Elmy)

- a) *"Taking time to understand the pre-migration process and how this impacts them in Canada"; "How to better support staff when service planning, what questions to ask when providing clinical consultation with staff".*
- b) *"This was a great training and presented in a manner that made the information easier to understand. Videos and statistics were a great addition".*

CWICE 106: Placements Across Borders, Family Sponsorships & Economic Immigration Streams
(Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Celistine Frampton)

- a) *"Very helpful to understand what questions we should be asking when considering placement across borders in order to support successful placements for the child and family".*
- b) *"This is an amazing training program that I am enjoying".*

CWICE 107: Temporary and Unresolved Immigration Status
(Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Abimbola Oyeyinka)

- a) *"Learned about the importance of asking about one's [immigration] status in Canada, their migration story and their current situation - implications of trafficking".*
- b) *"Very informative. Case studies/group work is helpful in the application of the learning".*

CWICE 108: Creating & Ensuring Equitable Outcomes in Child Welfare
(Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Alicja Grabarczyk)

Feedback from Graduates

"It is everyone's role to have more awareness and knowledge so that conversations can deepen, whether during internal consultations or with our families. We can then broaden our discussions to better understand their experiences and advocate for what support and help they need"

"This should be a mandatory training for all CW staff"

"This is invaluable training that should be taken by staff at all levels in order to understand how to do our work more effectively"

Foster Caregivers Training Evaluation
(Trainers: Claudia Obreque, Rosario Elmy, Fatima Mukai)

"This is good information to help children in care - what to do and where to go"
"Support network for children and youth in a care are very important"
"It's very good training"
"I really enjoyed the training"

Appendix B

January 2, 2023

ISSUE NOTE – Amendments to Ontario Regulations 155/18 and 156/18 under the CYFSA

Outline of Issue:

Cited as a model for part of the provincial child welfare re-design, CWICE was engaged in consultation with MCCSS in 2021 about changes to Ontario regulations. The regulation amendments, which take effect on July 1, 2023, are widely seen as the most substantial changes since Part X was introduced. Part of child welfare redesign and the implementation of the Quality Standards Framework, these regulations provide direction for child welfare practice in Ontario.

Specifically, amendments to regulation 156/18 under the Child, Youth, and Family Services Act have important enhancements to child rights. There is a focus on immigration status and citizenship as part of identity-related issues faced by children and youth. Among other changes, the upcoming regulations provide clarity on the importance of, and a timeline for, identifying and resolving outstanding immigration needs for children and youth in out-of-home care.

Over the next six months, it will be important for organizations and child welfare professionals to ensure implementation plans are in place. Change management strategies, from policy to training, will ensure practice shifts occur across Ontario. CWICE is available to assist our sector's preparation and focus on achieving positive outcomes for children and youth's identity needs that uphold their rights. To ensure successful transition to the new regulations, CWICE will share best practice approaches that individuals and organizations across Ontario can access.

Key messages:

- The regulation changes promote opportunities for meaningful engagement with children, youth, and families (ie. Obtaining migration stories as part of social histories).
- Verifying immigration status for children in out-of-home care means the voice of the child is integrated at all stages of service provision.
 - These practices could be extended to all children and youth receiving child welfare service.
- Resolving immigration status issues, or seeking citizenship, provides an awareness of the experiences of children or youth (and parents/families) within the immigration system.
- Supporting children and youth to achieve resolution increases their network building, access to services, sense of belonging, ability to make future plans, and provides permanency.
- Obtaining identity documents helps to uphold child rights (ie. Convention on the Rights of the Child)
 - Staff may also develop an increased understanding of child rights.
- There are many inter-related factors that need to be considered in planning and services, within the intersection of child welfare and unresolved immigration status issues, or unmet settlement needs, or border-related issues.

CWICE Recommendations for implementation:

CWICE continues to be available to support child welfare organizations in the following ways:

- Policy & Procedure:
 - Policy and Procedure template available
 - Consultation available regarding updating or developing policy and procedures related to regulation changes
- Outreach:
 - Virtual presentations available for child welfare professionals about our program
- Training:
 - Child welfare professionals are invited to attend our 8-course certificate training series, providing an overview of the immigration system in Canada and how it intersects with child welfare, along with best practice approaches
- Identity Data:
 - Tip sheet available for entering identity-based data into CPIN (specific to immigration)
 - Consultation available for reporting of identity-based data that includes immigration and citizenship
- Webinars:
 - Archived webinars available on OACAS' members site, including:
 - Justice for Children & Youth webinar from February 2023
- Consultations:
 - Centralized consultation centre is available to assist child welfare organizations with consulting when managing complex cases (Email: cwice@peelcas.org)
- Services:
 - CWICE will provide brief services related to individuals'/families' immigration status needs, or related needs for identity documents province-wide.

Related news:

[O. Reg. 350/22: GENERAL MATTERS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MINISTER \(ontario.ca\)](#)