



TOOLKIT

MARCH 2026

RESPONDING TO THE RISE IN HATE SPEECH, RACISM, ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT



INTRODUCTION - ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

The past few years has marked a clear rise in anti-immigration sentiment in both media and public discourse, with immigrants increasingly being viewed as the cause of systemic failings. Consequently, this has led to increased racism and hate crimes directed at newcomers and racialized communities.

Within the context of the settlement and integration sector, service providers organizations (SPOs) have shared that they are finding themselves having to navigate situations that could lead to harm against both their clients and staff, such as their social media posts being inundated with hate comments, bad faith actors disturbing public-facing immigration events, frontline staff getting accosted outside of work and other similar incidents.

To help organizations both counter the narratives that have sprung forward and navigate the increased hate being directed their—and their clients—way, we have designed the “Responding to the rise in hate speech, racism, anti-immigrant sentiment” Toolkit. Developed under the guidance of the anti-racism working groups, this toolkit is meant to be used for information and discussion purposes during team meetings to name the issues at hand and help staff teams become more aware and supported in acknowledging and addressing hate speech, racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.



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USING THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is divided into the following three sections:

1. Draft Action Sheet for Managers & Leaders [[page 3](#)]: This draft action sheet is designed as a starting point for managers and leaders to create their own action sheets to help implement organizational strategies to respond to racism. It provides information on what organizational leaders need to say, know, and do to respond to rising anti-immigrant sentiment.
2. Example Scenarios & Possible Responses [[page 12](#)]: Drawing from the experiences of service providers, these example scenarios detail specific instances of hate that may arise and potential responses. It is designed as a resource for leaders to share and discuss with their staff so that there can be organizational plans in place to address and respond to these common scenarios.
3. Additional Reading & Resources [[page 18](#)]: This list of resources provides further information and research relevant to combatting hate, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment.

1. This toolkit have been informed by members of the anti-racism working group who hold deep experience within and outside of the settlement sector and are acutely committed to their mission to serve newcomers while protecting settlement staff and operations.



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DRAFT ACTION SHEET FOR MANAGERS & LEADERS

This draft Action Sheet is meant to act as a starting point for leaders and managers to put together org-wide, cross-departmental, all-level Action Sheets for their staff. Action sheets can help to build a foundational understanding of rising anti-immigrant sentiment within organizations and can outline specific steps to address and minimize harm from racism and hate experienced both in person and online.

This draft action sheet is meant to be adaptable to meet the unique needs and characteristics of organizations and to be used by decision makers to prompt discussion and concrete, accountable, and impact-oriented actions within organizations.

As decision makers, the following are some best practices and guidelines for how you can use Action Sheets within your organization:

- Share the information verbally and in an ongoing way with your teams at an all-staff meeting. Do not forward this message or post on a bulletin, speak to them directly
- Identify and update policies and procedures that support your response
- If possible, designate an organizational lead on anti-racism to support staff with planning and response
- Share and post “Scenarios and Possible Responses” and relevant information from this action sheet with your staff



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... KNOW

Within the current political context, leaders, frontline staff, and newcomers are all impacted by the negative framing of immigration within political discourse. The “What You Need To...Know” Section shares some information to help leaders and staff understand the context of this harm and responsibilities of settlement service providers in this landscape.



CONTEXT

As political actors have increasingly blamed migration as the primary cause of Canada’s housing and health-care crises, there has been a rise in hate speech, racism, and anti-immigration sentiment that places unfair blame on racialized groups. This has been accompanied by a quantified increase in hate incidents and threats as shared by 2026 StrongCities Network:

- In 2023, 44.5% of reported hate incidents including threats and assaults targeted South Asians and Black people
- In 2022, 2023 and into 2025, hate crimes reported against Muslim and Jewish populations rose sharply
- Anti-Indigenous hate crimes reported to police jumped to 152% during the COVID -19 pandemic

Even with this data, we know that reported hate highly underestimates hate incidents in general and can mask anti-Indigenous hate given the institutionalized and systemic nature of anti-Indigenous racism.

Settlement sector Working Group members and partners have indicated how the general rise in hate and anti-immigrant sentiment has led to alarming instances of increased fear and lack of safety for staff who are developing and delivering services. Lack of safety includes, but is not limited to, personal and professional targeting by racist, anti-immigrant and hateful actors within communities.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... KNOW



THE IMPACT

Poor handling of hate speech, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment results in profound harm. Impacts can include low service uptake, low recruitment/retention, newcomers being unsafe accessing services/programs, newcomers facing continued violence and harm, increased isolation, and poor mental health, and staff being unsafe delivering services/programs.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Many settlement sector leaders are eager to respond to the rise in racism and anti-immigrant sentiment in order to protect the quality and integrity of services delivered to thousands of newcomers across the province and those who serve them.

Service providers can and do improve staff and client experiences within the settlement journey. The settlement sector responds to lived experiences of racism and migration in decision-making through empowering folks to share, validating their experiences, and creating a safe space that is confidential. Safe work environments are expected and required to deliver adequate settlement services and programs.

Service providers may want to consider formal engagements with services such as organizations delivering support for sexual orientation and gender inclusion, domestic violence services, sanctuary health, and sanctuary services that have expertise dealing with the need for increased measures in delivering services and programs to populations that are marginalized.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... SAY

The “What You Need To...Say” section shares some language and phrasing to help leaders speak to their staff about their organization’s values, policies, responsibilities, and actions related to combatting racism.



As settlement service providers, we have a responsibility and obligation to deliver services and programs to newcomers to Canada. There are many reasons why newcomers face barriers to accessing settlement services and programs, and so we are sharing material that includes client-developed situations and responses so that we can continue to provide settlement services without causing harm to newcomers accessing these services.

Our organization has guidelines to support a consistent, sector-wide response to the rise in hate-speech, racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... SAY



THE BC HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

The BC Human Rights Code requires us to help make sure everyone can participate equally in daily life in British Columbia. The Code protects you from harmful treatment called discrimination. The Code protects you in certain areas of daily life based on parts of your identity including: age, family status, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, race, colour, place of origin, ancestry, Indigenous identity, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, criminal conviction, political belief, source of income.



OUR POLICY

Our Policy... [share any of your organization's relevant policies such as respectful workplace, anti-racism, anti-discrimination]

We value newcomer clients and hold their safety and security as a primary priority in delivery of all settlement services and programs in person and online.

It is important that each of knows how to assess the situation – responses to racism depend on lived experience and the empowerment for people to share, be validated, and experience a safe/confidential space to share their experiences and receive options for support. This also includes helping clients make an informed decision about accessing services and programs.

Know how you can plan safer service and program delivery in person and online, take action to mitigate and eliminate in person and online hate.



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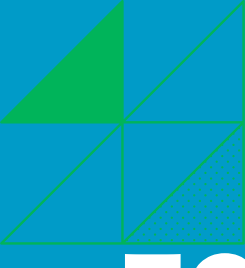
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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... DO

The “What You Need To...Do” section offers guidance on potential actions that service providers can consider implementing so that their service delivery is planned with an awareness of potential harms that may result from rising anti-immigrant sentiment and hate speech.

While the evaluation of risk/safety and appropriate responses will be different for every organization and community, the following “Dos” and “Don’ts” were drafted with guidance from service providers about their current practices to provide ideas about potential actions that can be taken. Depending on your situation, action can include any/all of the following.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... DO

Do develop further ‘dos’ ‘don’ts’ through ongoing discussions with staff teams and client groups.

Do address weaponization of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion language by using your organizational platform (e.g., staff memo, public bulletin, webpage, annual report) to state values and positions clearly for staff and clients. For example, if people claim land acknowledgements make them “feel unsafe,” do reiterate the importance of organizational commitments to decolonization.

Do create safety for all the EDI and antiracism spaces being created (e.g., anti-racism working groups, employee resource groups). Protect these spaces from people who do not share the lived experience of those these groups are meant to serve. Protect these groups and the members within them so they last and can continue to make the systemic changes that are needed.

Do conduct targeted outreach with partner organizations via phone-based and in-person outreach to newcomers. Include secure joining details on service or program such as advance registration or a joining code.

Do rotate services and program delivery formats if there is concern that your programs may be targeted by bad actors.

Do provide staff contact information directly to individual newcomers to register for services and programs.

Don’t post or advertise settlement services and programs with location/times publicly online or via poster on public bulletins.

Don’t hold online services in an open, live-stream or drop-in format.

Don’t enable comments on online posts about your services/programs. (See “Scenarios & Possible Responses”) for how to respond to demands for free speech).

Don’t share personal contact information about staff or clients, unless required by law to disclose and in consultation with a legal expert. Maintain privacy and confidentiality.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... DO

Do speak up against hate and report any hate speech (including racism and anti-immigration sentiments) to your team lead. Consider coordinating with your team to promptly flag hate speech for removal according to platform processes as multiple flags are important for action.

Do create an increased volume of positive content alongside dates of significance/moments to counteract hate speech that help unite us with shared values.

Do support intergroup contact to improve positive attitudes among populations. Consider collaborations with organizations who have resources and space to support/host/conduct.

Do identify, share, and create personal and organizational digital safety measures such as protocols to [document incidents of hate](#), to respond to incidents, to use professional emails, to identify peer support networks and debrief spaces.

Do check in with staff and clients before and after service/program delivery.

Do offer low-key phrasing in public outreach materials if there is concern that certain phrases will attract negative attention. For example, in certain contexts, using words like “immigrant,” “newcomer,” or “anti-racism” may be target by bad actors. Instead, consider other descriptive phrases to advertise services such as, “first-time employment services.”



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WHAT YOU NEED TO ... DO

Do offer in-person outreach sessions using existing spaces with security such as schools and library and in neighbouring communities. Offer a range of organizational tables for local community to learn about newcomers and to name and combat some of the harmful myths.

Do embed and integrate policy-creation with newcomer feedback and engagement events. Convene with First Nations to invite and share lived experiences and traditional knowledges so that you can unpack definitions of racism and discrimination and take policy action together.

Do host a newcomer event where values-aligned agencies and organizations come together to share/deliver services; as a host, you can share with clients what your agency offers.

Do host invitation-only incident debriefs and supported dialogues with neighbouring towns to discuss impacts of immigration changes on newcomers. Ensure there are Indigenous community members and non-newcomers who are participating in the spirit of learning and sharing real experiences with immigration changes.

Do support municipal anti-racism strategies to connect with a range of service providers and improve awareness of current experiences.



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SCENARIOS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES

These “Scenarios and Possible Responses” outline examples of hate and anti-immigrant sentiment that have been experienced by service providers as well as possible responses. An additional sub-section of the responses includes “possible outcomes” which indicates ways that you may wish to measure and evaluate the impact of implementing the corresponding action/response.

SCENARIOS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE RESPONSE
Harm is witnessed or experienced by staff and/or client	There is a safe and anonymous place available that allows staff/clients to share what they witnessed so that the SPO will follow up. Safe and anonymous places to report can include places within the organization (e.g., HR branches where there is transparency about who has access to information) or outside of the organization (e.g., Human Rights Commissioner). For more guidelines on establishing complaints processes, see resources from The BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner and Ombudsperson British Columbia Possible Outcome: Clients and staff indicate positive response when raising issues of racism and discrimination
Staff are subjected to harm while delivering settlement services and programs	Staff can access support for mental health and wellness via relevant/open benefits, self-care, and culturally relevant/safe/diverse counselling services. Consider working with existing benefits providers to expand equity in coverage in relation to staff needs (e.g., hormone replacement policy, coverage for Indigenous community supports and knowledge keepers). Ensure there are communications to staff so they know about the benefits and support that they can access Possible Outcomes: ● 50% increase in staff retention among marginalized staff groups within 5 years ● Increase representation of staff recruitment from diverse groups within 5 years

SCENARIOS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE RESPONSE
Incidents of hate speech, racism, and/or anti-immigrant sentiment are being experienced at staff and client level	Leaders acknowledge early and often the lived experiences of service providers and newcomers and take action to ensure staff and clients are supported through these incidents. Communicate annually internally with all staff and clients about anti-racist actions and impacts.
SPOs are disproportionately impacted and isolated in responding to hate, racism, and/or anti-immigrant sentiment	Leaders develop partnerships with new organizations serving 2SLGBTQIA+ people, people affected by domestic violence, undocumented people, and people with precarious status Share learnings from sectors that have historically served marginalized members of community Communicate publicly about the need for anti-racist actions within the settlement sector
Online and printed posters advertise upcoming workshops for newcomers. Named staff and location are targeted by hate, racism and anti-immigrant sentiment	Revise and narrow outreach approach Post in private, invite-only groups with SPO staff as admin Eliminate online posting and commenting Eliminate detailed information on advertisements and promotion Require advance registration from registered clients/members/family only Phone invitation to individual clients Embed service delivery within other public service buildings Vary location and timing of service delivery

SCENARIOS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE RESPONSE
Continued: Online and printed posters advertise upcoming workshops for newcomers. Named staff and location are targeted by hate, racism and anti-immigrant sentiment	Only share event details with known guests Prepare contingency plan to exit safely as needed Consider online-only engagement with “waiting room” enabled and staff “host” abilities to remove guests as needed Reiterate expectation for safe work environments and respectful workplace policies Deliver policy and training that explicitly state what safe and respectful work environments look like Inform staff about reporting, investigation and resolution processes; allow for hands-on practice in filing report Make time for staff to do the work safely (phone call outreach, targeted emails and outreach leading up to sessions, varied venues)
SPOs are publicly funded, so the public is allowed to exercise free speech	Rights are relational. Assert that the right to free speech is limited to the infringement on other rights like being free from discrimination You reserve the right to turn off commenting completely and in response to discriminatory speech You reserve the right to limit service and program access to protect the rights of participants (anti-immigrant, anti-SOGI, anti-trans etc.)



SCENARIOS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE RESPONSE
Public inbox or comment page is receiving hateful, racist, anti-immigrant messages	If you cannot protect staff from being harmed by screening these messages that are harmful, then you may consider sunseting public inbox and comment page features until further notice You may assign screening of messages to non-racialized staff who do not have other marginalized identities
Clients are facing hate, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment in their communities	Reduce isolation for newcomer communities Continue to provide more in-person and online spaces for newcomers to connect formally and informally Focus on naming the issues, sharing resources for follow-up and positive mental health tools and resources Offer affinity spaces for staff via Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) Offer affinity spaces for clients such as Black newcomers spaces, 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers spaces, domestic violence victim spaces, undocumented migrants spaces (assure all spaces are sanctuary spaces), etc. Offer trauma-informed care and support for those clients Possible Outcomes: • Clients receive consistent and equitable levels of support • Clients build trust with SPOs • Improved integration of newcomers into community

SCENARIOS & POSSIBLE RESPONSES

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE RESPONSE
Partner organizations giving information about clients and their immigration status and putting clients and their families in danger	Brief all staff on privacy and confidentiality requirements noting that information about clients and staff are not required to be shared except when required by law Clients can be assured that they are safe from border services inquiries and deportation when accessing settlement services
Client shares frustration with lack of job opportunities and blames another group for policy failure quoting or sharing mis/dis information about another group	Aim to focus on the problem the client is directly facing rather than explaining your perspective on the real/perceived reason for the problem they are faced with E.g., “I can hear your frustration with finding employment, here’s how I can help...”
Team members and clients experience harassment in public spaces (e.g., SPO parking lot)	Engage with City to establish safety protocol, possible amendment to public safety by-law to add anti-discrimination and street harassment points. See recent bylaw from the City of Penticton as an example Possible Outcome: Staff and clients report increased support in delivering and accessing services and programs



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ADDITIONAL READINGS & RESOURCES

These additional readings and resources provide additional research and context on the rising anti-immigration sentiment and hate incidents.



"We all have to remember that hate crimes are preceded by hate speech." This is how Adama Dieng, UN's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, starts the Stopping Hate Speech video. "We have to bear in mind that words kill. Words kill as bullets", he continued. [IOM](#)

Hate is moving into the mainstream – in liberal democracies and authoritarian systems alike. And with each broken norm, the pillars of our common humanity are weakened. [UN](#)

Canada's political leaders are increasingly casting immigrants as 'outsiders' and blaming immigrants for the country's labour market, housing and health-care problems. Political discourse routinely casts increased migration as the primary cause of Canada's housing and health-care crises. In Canada, anti-immigrant and anti-newcomer hate often revolves around race, with racialized and ethno-religious groups. [Queens University](#)

Systemic anti-Indigenous racism results in under-reporting of hate incidents targeted Indigenous people. [BCHRT](#)

The normalization of hate speech online is linked to access to online platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, X) and the mainstream use of conspiracy theories like the "great replacement theory". [Global Project Against Hate and Extremism](#).

Historically, Canada has been a central figure in the global politics of refugee protection, in providing humanitarian assistance to displaced persons, championing the only private sponsorship model, and in demonstrating sustained domestic support for these policies. [YorkU](#)

See [Strong Cities Network](#) "General Track" online modules.