

Practice #12: Lunch and Chats at the Vanier Community Service Centre (Ottawa)

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Language Context

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Practice #12: Lunch and Chats at the Vanier Community Service Centre (Ottawa)

This practice contributes to improving:

- Interinstitutional coordination, liaison and integration mechanisms.

The organization implementing this practice:

Vanier Community Service Centre, Vanier Ottawa.

The information contained in this file was mainly acquired from a telephone interview conducted on August 3, 2017, with Barra Thiom, Community Developer for the Vanier Community Service Centre. It was complemented by documentary research, and these sources are cited as references.

Background

The Vanier neighbourhood, located east of the Rideau River in the City of Ottawa, is home to a significant number of Francophone seniors.¹ However, both the lack of French-language services and precarious socioeconomic conditions tend to increase this population's vulnerability.

The Vanier Community Service Centre (CSC Vanier²) "works closely with seniors and partners to develop a range of activities and services which counter isolation, increase residents' knowledge by connecting them to useful resources and encourage community involvement and participation".³ The Centre also actively promotes and protects the rights of seniors in a linguistic minority situation.

Objectives

Lunch and Chats led by CSC Vanier aim to counter isolation and to inform and equip seniors living in the Vanier area with a view to increasing their quality of life. They target two neighbouring subsidized facilities for seniors.

Features of the Practice

Lunch and Chats were created in 2009 following a collaborative effort between various local actors, including Ottawa Public Health, the Centre de services Guigues (a centre for Francophone seniors), Ottawa Community Housing (OCH)⁴, subsidized seniors' housing resident committees, and CSC Vanier. Since then, meetings have been held monthly. Discussion themes are set out by CSC Vanier service providers, in consultation with partners and seniors themselves. Some of

1 Proportion of residents whose mother tongue is French: 40.6% (Vanier South) and 36.9% (Vanier North). *Statistics Canada Census of Population 2011; Ottawa Community Data Consortium, Community Data Program of the Canadian Council on Social Development*, accessed on February 7, 2019, from the [Ottawa Neighbourhood Study](#) under their [Terms of Use](#).

2 Vanier community Service Center, accessed on July 20, 2017, at: <http://www.cscvanier.com/en>

3 Centre des services communautaires Vanier. (n.d.) *Aînés, une priorité pour Vanier!* Accessed on July 20, 2017, at: <http://www.cscvanier.com/fr/communaute/developpement-communautaire/soutien-aux-aines>

4 Ottawa Community Housing, accessed on July 20, 2017, at: <http://ochfoundation.ca/partners/ottawa-community-housing/>

the topics addressed include medication management, community resources, nutrition, and fall prevention.

Lunch and Chats provide:

- A meeting space in a welcoming atmosphere (a shared meal) to discuss themes of interest to seniors;
- Awareness-raising on various topics;
- An opportunity to build trust between the person who is supported and the CSC Vanier worker;
- A gateway for seniors who may be isolated and in need of health and social services in French.

Challenges

Resource persons raised three challenges the project had to face. They relate to: a) participation among seniors living in the neighbourhood; it would have been useful to build a trusting relationship with them to promote their participation; b) the presence of one resident committee chair, which was not supportive for collective management; c) the lack of funding; Lunch and Chats are currently exclusively funded CSC Vanier.

Analysis⁵

Why is this practice considered innovative?

This practice meets a community need and it is perceived as innovative by the actors in charge of its implementation. In fact, it was born out of the need to counter isolation among seniors, particularly those who live in subsidized facilities, to enhance their quality of life.

Emerging, Promising or Leading: A Promising Practice

- **Quality of evidence:** The practice was subjected to an evaluation process that confirmed the alignment between practice goals and CSC Vanier's strategic plan.⁶ This process identified aspects that could be improved. The practice is well perceived by beneficiaries, service providers, and partners. Data is compiled yearly and includes the number of Lunch and Chats participants as well as partnerships created.
- **Impact:** Community stakeholders recognize this practice's positive effects on healthcare system performance by breaking down isolation and informing and supporting seniors with a view to increase their quality of life.

Lunch and Chats are a gateway for seniors who may be isolated and in need of health and social services in French by facilitating their access to CSC Vanier services and by building a trusting relationship with a service provider during lunches. This activity also

⁵ This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada, available at: https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf also outlined in Appendix 1.

⁶ Laniel, M-E. (2012). *Enabling Occupation among Isolated Seniors*. Final Report Prepared for the Vanier Community Service Center (VCSC).

contributed to CSC Vanier identifying the need for and implementation of other projects for seniors.

- **Applicability:** The practice is ongoing in two facilities targeted by the Vanier Community Service Centre. It is conceivable that similar practices could be organized by other community service centres in Ottawa and beyond, although resource persons who were consulted had no data on this matter.
- **Transferability:** We have no information on other similar initiatives.