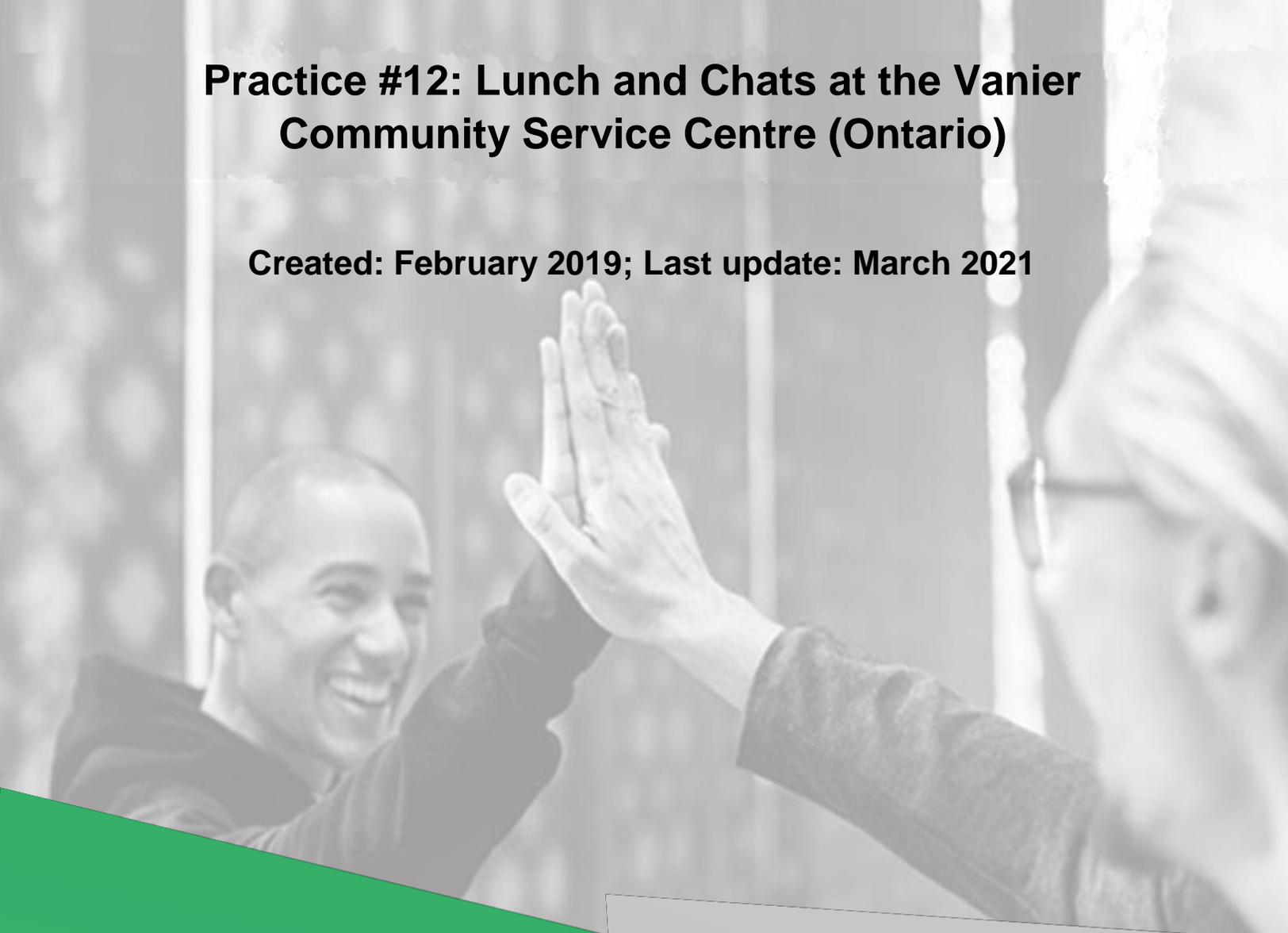


Practice #12: Lunch and Chats at the Vanier Community Service Centre (Ontario)

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ABOUT THE FACT SHEET

This fact sheet is part of the *Directory of Innovative Practices in Health and Social Services in Official Language Minority Contexts* (available at: https://www.grefops.ca/directory_innovative_practices.html)

The *Directory of Innovative Practices* (formerly the Handbook of Innovative Practices on the Integration of Official Language Minority Health and Social Services) is a complementary resource to the *Organizational and Community Resources Self-Assessment Tool for Active Offer and Social and Health Services Continuity*¹. It presents initiatives that have been put in place, most often at the local level, that respond to a community need and are perceived as innovative by the various actors involved in their implementation. The practices were identified, analyzed and classified according to an evaluation framework developed by the Health Council of Canada. This framework allowed us to distinguish between emerging practices, promising practices and leading practices. Some of these practices were suggested by the *Société Santé en français* and the provincial, territorial and regional French-language health networks, or other partners.

The reader is referred to the [Introduction and Method](#) document for information about the authors and collaborators, background on the project, a description of the methodology used to create the fact sheets, definitions of the following concepts:

- Leading Practice, Promising Practice, Emerging Practice
- Quality of evidence, impact, applicability, transferability
- Service coordination, service integration, liaison
- Active offer

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¹ The self-assessment Tool is available in English and French and can be accessed at the following Web address:
https://www.grefops.ca/selfassessment_tool.html (English version)
https://www.grefops.ca/outil_autoevaluation.html (French version)

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 fact sheet 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. The fact sheet was revised in March 2021 in collaboration with Mr. Thiom.

Background

The Vanier neighbourhood, located east of the Rideau River in the City of Ottawa, is home to a significant number of Francophone seniors.² 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 Vanier³) "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".⁴ 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)⁵, subsidized seniors' housing resident committees, and CSC Vanier. Since then, meetings have been held monthly. Discussion themes are set out by CSC Vanier

² 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. Retrieved from: [Ottawa Neighbourhood Study](#) under their [Terms of Use](#).

³ Vanier community Service Center, accessed on July 20, 2017, Retrieved from : <http://www.cscvanier.com/en>

⁴ Centre des services communautaires Vanier. (n.d.) *Aînés, une priorité pour Vanier!* Accessed on July 20, 2017. Retrieved from : <http://www.cscvanier.com/fr/communaute/developpement-communautaire/soutien-aux-aines>

⁵ Ottawa.Community Housing, accessed on July 20, 2017. Retrieved from : <http://ochfoundation.ca/partners/ottawa-community-housing/>

service providers, in consultation with partners and seniors themselves. Some of 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.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, since face-to-face meetings were not possible, the lunch meetings were transformed into a needs analysis laboratory. The CSC food bank service delivered boxed lunches to residents every two weeks instead of monthly, allowing for regular contact with residents and noting their needs. As this is a population with limited mobility and no access to technological resources, the common room was for many their only means of contact with others. In this time of pandemic, the CSC is considering activities for residents, while respecting health guidelines, to meet this need for social contact. For example, in September 2020, the CSC organized a lunchtime event (with boxed lunches delivered) where residents could participate, right on their balcony, in an outdoor show delivered by two local artists.

Challenges

Resource persons raised three challenges the project had to face in 2018. 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.

At the time of this fact sheet's update in 2021, the only remaining challenge is the lack of funding.

Analysis⁶

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.

⁶ This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada. Retrieved from: https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf also outlined in the Introduction and method document.

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.⁷ 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 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.

⁷ Laniel, M-E. (2012). *Enabling Occupation among Isolated Seniors*. Final Report Prepared for the Vanier Community Service Center (VCSC).