



# Cultural Brokerage Program (CCBP)

## Executive Summary of Evaluation

Nov 1, 2019 – October 31, 2020

"I honestly wish I could have you at all my meetings, softening my words to make them both more impactful and easier for families to hear, understand, integrate and act upon. Your practice, skills and support have enhanced my practice in a way that I will carry with me through my career." – Children's Services Case Worker

**Introduction:** This report presents findings from the 2020 CCIS Cultural Brokerage Program (CCBP) outcome evaluation, which covers the period from November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020. A mixed-method approach was used to gather information and perspectives from a variety of sources, including case reports ( $n=20$ ), administrative data, Client Exit Survey data, focus group with Brokers ( $n=1$ ), Broker meeting observation ( $n=2$ ) interviews with Children's Services Staff ( $n=10$ ), interviews with leadership from both organizations ( $n=3$ ), and interviews with clients ( $n=10$ ).

**About CCBP:** The Cultural Brokerage Program is a partnership between Calgary Catholic Immigration Society's (CCIS) Family and Children's Services (FCS) Division and the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services (Children's Services). This Alberta Human Services funded program was co-developed in 2014 to address an identified need for enhanced, culturally responsive services for immigrant families involved with Children's Services. The CCBP team is multicultural and multilingual; lived experience and fluency in a non-English language are important assets for Cultural Brokers who draw on this knowledge and experience to understand and broker the perspectives of families involved with Children's Services. The CCPB team also has access to CCIS' Interpretation and Translation services.

**Family Violence Brokers & Apartment 1310:** The CCBP includes a female and a male Family Violence Broker as supplementary supports to the Broker team as generally half of families have a Family Violence (FV) concern. The FV Brokers work to increase household awareness of family violence and how it is defined and responded to in Canada, and to increase access to available community resources/options. Apartment 1310 provides temporary accommodation and immediate programming for perpetrators of family violence who are required to separate from the family

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## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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The CCIS Cultural Brokerage Program (CCBP) is integral to the practice of Children's Services (CS), providing cultural and language interpretation that is essential to achieving accurate assessments and positive and sustained outcomes for children and families. While Children's Services involvement with families is a system *intervention*, by addressing underlying causes and triggers that have led to that involvement, the CCBP is a preventative service in that it reduces the severity of immediate outcomes for families and of future recidivism.

*"I could not imagine the disservice we would be doing to families if the program ended" -CS*

Evaluation activities revealed that the partnership between Children's Services and CCIS is strong, resilient, and can adapt to changing circumstances and challenging situations. The Cultural Brokerage program is not only key to achieving equitable outcomes for families involved with Children's Services but is also influencing the approach of the institution itself, supporting it to become increasingly culturally responsive. The program is highly valued by Children's Services staff, clients, and Brokers who can all identify its importance in reducing barriers and working toward common outcomes.

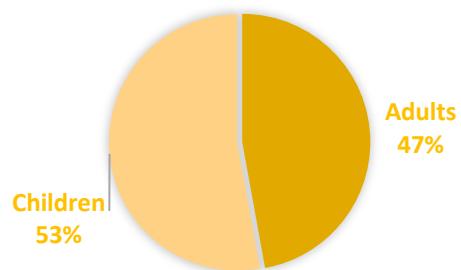
There are a number of factors that influence the success of the program. This includes a co-developed model that functions as a deeply embedded partnership between CCIS and Children's Services. Strong leadership supports both staff teams to maintain a vision for the program, uphold working boundaries, adapt to emergent needs, and troubleshoot challenges. Skilled and competent Brokers who are well-versed in the CS system and community resources, are able to connect with families through lived experience, and are able to invest in strong working relationships with Children's Services staff are central to achieving outcomes.

The program is highly recommended to continue. Clients are clearly supported to have a more positive, empowering, and expedient experience with Children's Services, while having underlying needs addressed to prevent future crises. Stakeholders are also clear in identifying that the need for the CCBP is greater than the availability of support, with persistent gaps in the broader system of support for culturally diverse families. Gaps in preventative services, first-language services, and culturally responsive services continue to make the work difficult and point to the need for ongoing systems advocacy. The CCIS Cultural Brokerage Program itself may not be able to expand while also maintaining the fidelity of the model – which is based on a strong internal community of practice and relationships of trust – however the model has definite potential to be scaled to other systems and communities.

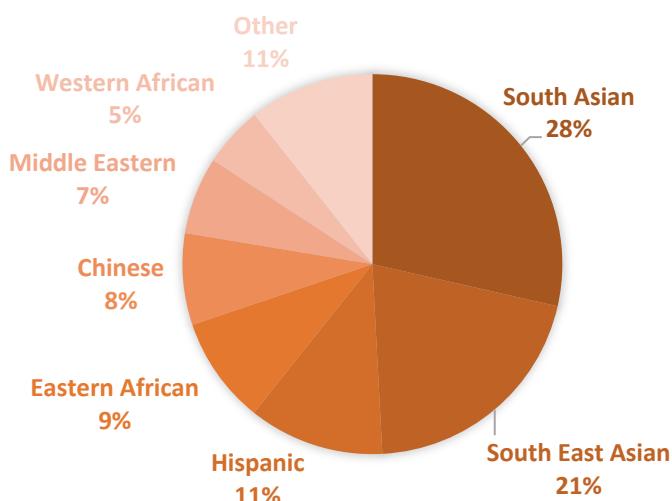
## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CCBP CLIENTS (Nov1, 2019 – Oct31, 2020)

- ❖ The CCBP supported a total of **544 families**, including 1035 children and 923 adults.
- ❖ CCPB clients represented **71 countries of origin and 40 languages**.

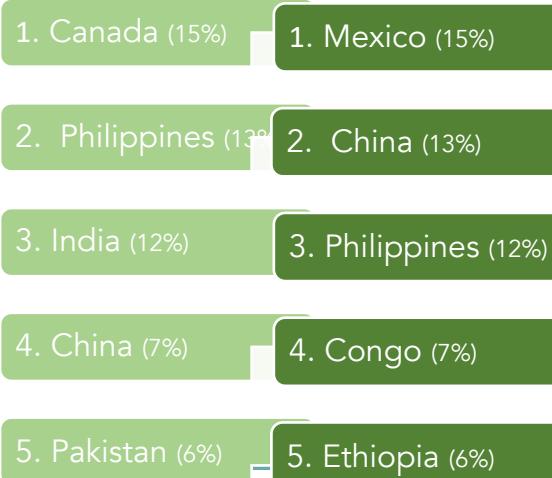
Client breakdown



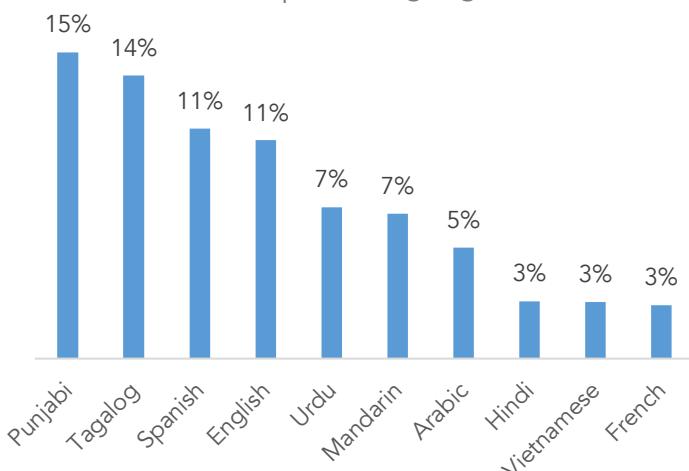
Cultural Background



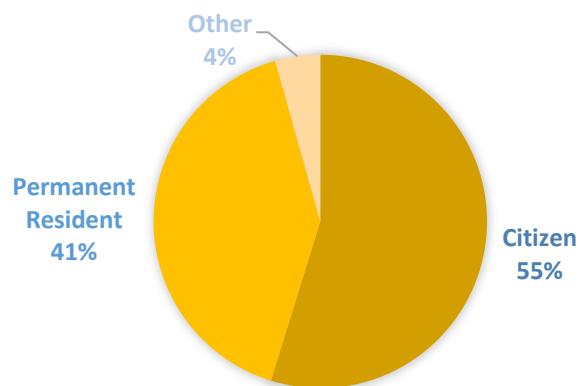
Top 5 Countries of Origin  
Individuals Families



Top 10 Languages

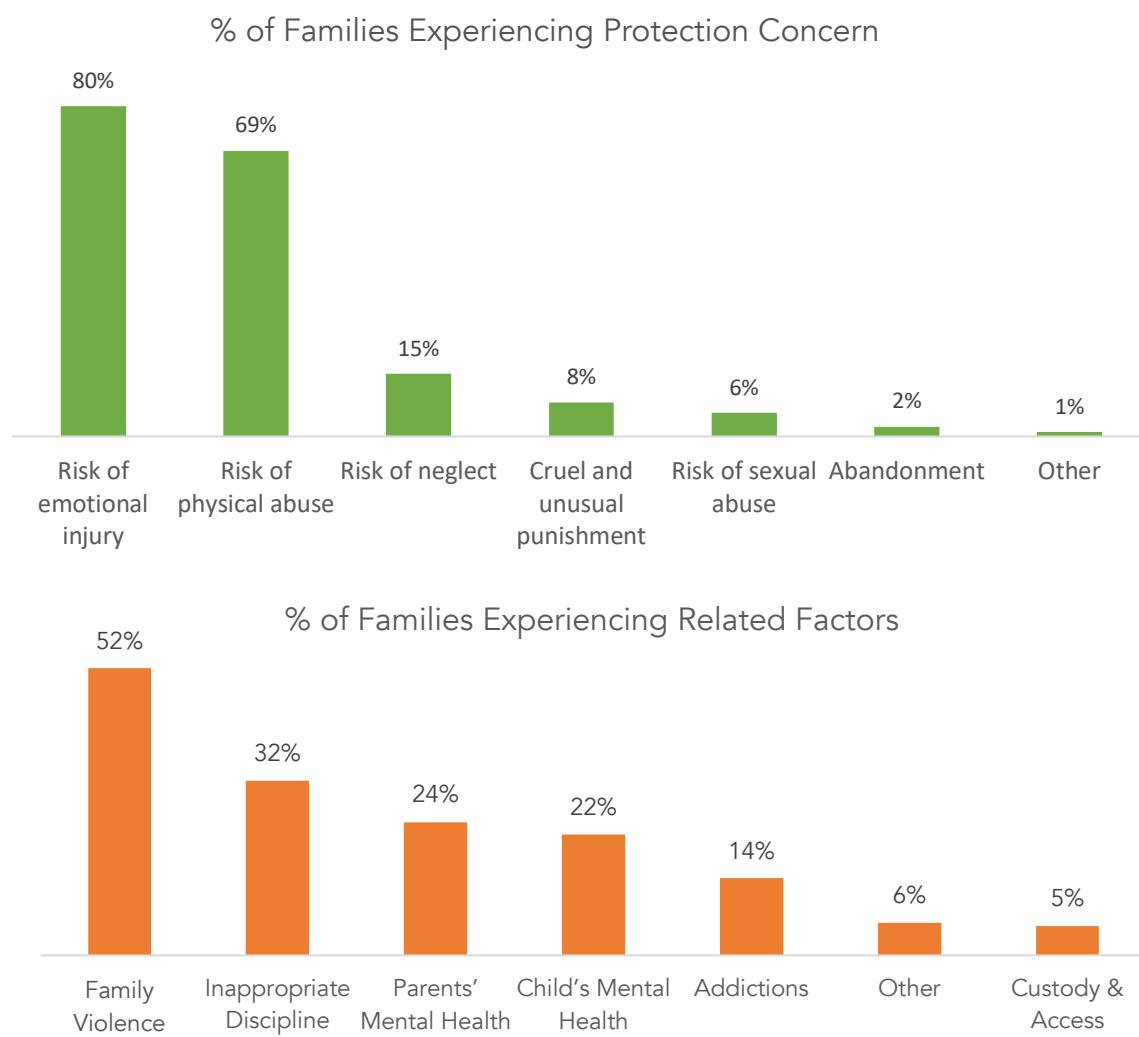


Immigration Status



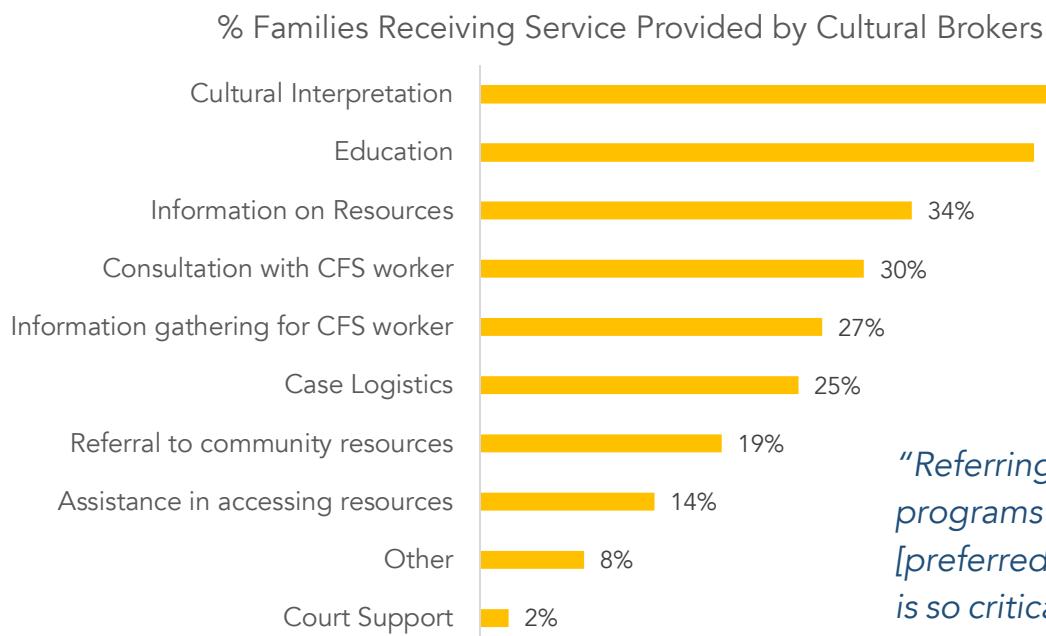
## CASE PROFILES & BROKER SUPPORTS

While overall cases were lower this year, due to reduced reporting through schools and community contacts due to pandemic-related closures, the severity of cases and underlying concerns increased: Risk of emotional injury and risk of physical abuse were the dominant protection concerns for the families involved with Brokers – they increased by 7% and 4% respectively, as compared to the year prior. Key underlying risk factors or related concerns were identified as family violence, inappropriate discipline, and mental health for one or more parents and/or children, and addiction. All showed an increase from last year: FV increased by 8%; mental health concerns increased by 4% for parents and 6% for children; and addictions increased by 4%. For most of the families involved with the CCBP, resettlement concerns including cross-cultural parenting, stress of migration and resettlement, and a lack of community connections, are exacerbating factor that have led to their involvement with Children's Services. Mental health related concerns increased by 7% and families impacted by language barriers increased by 13% as compared to the year prior.



Cultural Brokers fulfill a number of services in their support to families and Children's Services (CS), the most significant of which are cultural interpretation between the family and CS, education (44%) about parenting norms and expectations, and referrals to culturally appropriate resources (34%) to support ongoing learning and address underlying factors.

#### Average Days of Involvement with CCBP, Summarized by Level



*"Referring clients to programs in their [preferred] language is so critical" – CS staff*

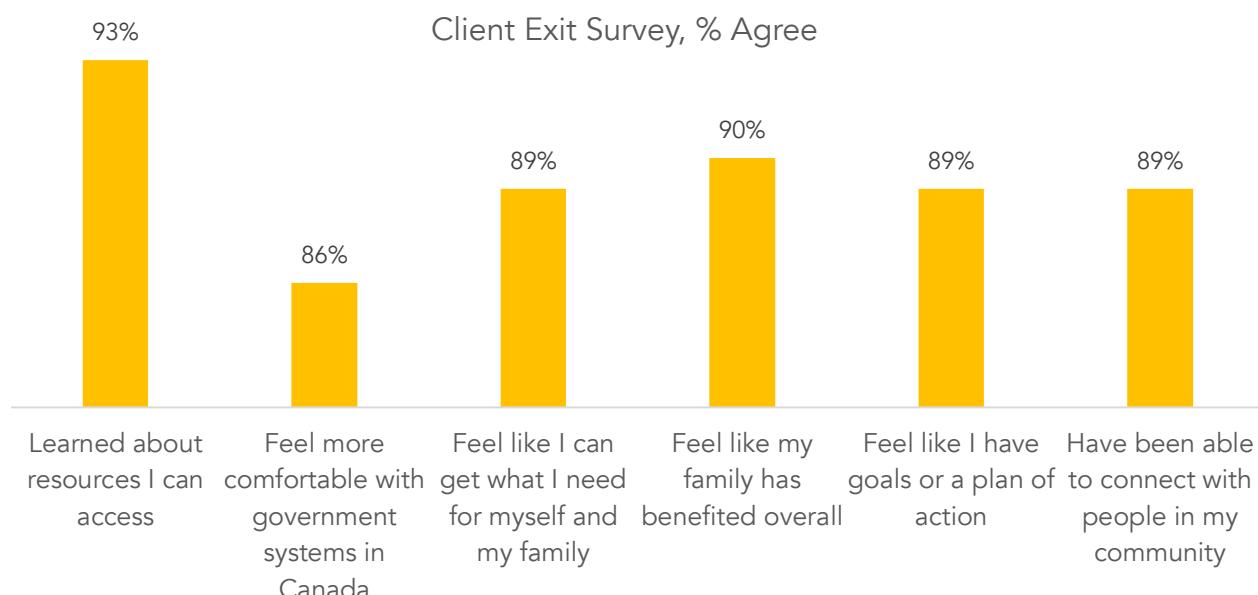
## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The CCIS Cultural Brokerage Program continues to achieve wide ranging and consistent outcomes for families and for Children's services. Key outcomes and impacts of the program that have been identified through the evaluation include:

- ❖ Mitigates linguistic barriers and brokers cultural perspectives ultimately increasing understanding between CS and the family

*"[Before the Broker] the Child Services worker couldn't understand why I was doing certain things with my children"*

- ❖ Clients increase understanding of the system including the purpose, role, and expectations of the system and the process at hand  
*"They help explain that [Children's Services] have authority to remove children but also help to understand that Children's Services and police are not corrupt"*
- ❖ Clients have an increased understanding of Canadian parenting norms and expectations  
*"I thought I already knew a lot about Canada, but through the process I learned there were lots of differences...part of the problem was...[that] I should improve my parenting skills"*
- ❖ Children's Services staff increase their knowledge and awareness of how culture and migration experiences influence service reception  
*"Every time I work with a broker, I learn new things"*
- ❖ Clients are more engaged in the process and empowered to communicate their needs and questions  
*"I notice clients asking more questions"*
- ❖ Clients increase trust and confidence in the system and Children's Services staff  
*"A lot of things would be hidden due to fear and mistrust of the system"*
- ❖ Children's Services staff increase their comfort and capacity working in cross-cultural environments  
*"I feel more comfortable asking families questions about their culture"*
- ❖ Clients have a more positive experience of the Children's Services systems (reduced anxiety, stress, intimidation, distrust, trauma)  
*"The broker has a way of easing [the client's] anxiety"*



- ❖ Children's Services staff increase their confidence and capacity to accurately assess and monitor cases  
*"My investigation would not be as good without the support of the cultural brokers"*
  - ❖ Children's Services staff have, via the Brokers, more consistent monitoring and support to families
  - ❖ Clients are connected to culturally responsive supports in the community  
*"[The Broker] introduced a lot of programs to me and they helped a lot. I wouldn't have known those resources myself."*
  - ❖ Children's Services achieves service goals with more efficiency  
*"The files flow smoother and faster"*
  - ❖ Reduced case severity and recidivism  
*"Files don't tend to come back unless there is a major crisis"*
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## FACTORS OF SUCCESS

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To date, the Brokerage Program has shown consistent outcomes and is a proven promising practice. Key factors of success include:

- ❖ **Co-development**

The stability and sustainability of the CCBP is largely attributed to the way the program was initially developed: in partnership. The spirit of co-development continues to inform the work between Brokers and Case workers and between Brokers and families.

- ❖ **Leadership and partnership maintenance:**

Common values and a shared vision for the program at the level of leadership and management provides a strong foundation for the program, supporting staff to maintain boundaries and to respond to emergent opportunities.

- ❖ **Co-location & relationships of trust**

Staff from both teams have developed strong working relationships, based in trust, respect, and a common vision. Brokers are "integrated" and "always a part of everything" from formal meetings to informal gatherings at the Children's Services sites. Relationships of trust also extend to communities and external agencies. Brokers invest

*"I am really proud of how we built this program. I continue to hear from staff how instrumental workers are in both assisting families and helping our staff be able to deliver culturally responsive services." -CS leadership*

time to build strong working relationships with specific staff at the agencies they refer to.

#### ❖ Peer support / community of practice

The relationship between Brokers shares characteristics of a Community of Practice or Peer Support model. They work independently but meet bi-weekly to discuss cases and share learnings. These meetings provide practical mentorship, problem solving, and emotional support. Brokers are also available to one another at any time and are encouraged to connect to debrief at any time.

#### ❖ Broker skills and competencies

Broker efficacy is fundamental to the success of the program. When asked what makes an effective Broker, stakeholders identified the following characteristics:

	Knowledge of community resources	→	Consistency
	Knowledge of Children's Services legislation and mandate		Flexibility & Responsiveness
	Patience		Collaboration & Relationship Building
	Empathy		Approachable
	Connections with community		Strength-based & Non-judgemental
	Lived experience of migration and fluency in a non-English language	↔	Cultural responsiveness

*"I like that the Brokers update me. I get so many new files a month that I need a Broker that constantly updates me"*

*"[The Brokers are] easy to access and effective. The Brokers we have on staff are fantastic; they are responsive, available, flexible to emergency and short notice"*