



NEWCOMER ARTISTS MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

Newcomer Artists Mental Health Training

Access Alliance uses the arts to support newcomer mental health and wellness, offering a wide range of expressive arts programs. Arts programming began over two decades ago with diverse facilitators and modalities, and today a team-based approach continues to integrate arts into settlement and healthcare services. The organization is always seeking art-based facilitators who reflect the diversity of newcomer communities, recognizing the richness and impact that community arts bring to healing and well-being.

The *Newcomer Artists Mental Health Training* was created in response to the need for education and practical techniques to help artists support participants experiencing mental health challenges or crises. The training was piloted in partnership with MABELLEarts' Welcome to the Neighbourhood Initiative.

This report features newcomer artist responses from two cohorts of trainings between 2023 - 2025

Artists are cultural bearers, trusted messengers, creative workers, dreamers, storytellers, and healers. They connect our history, sense of purpose, and wellbeing - Arts for Everybody





Collaboration Map

Arts for Newcomer Mental Health

Access Alliance leverages the arts to enhance mental health and wellness among newcomers. Arts programming began over two decades ago with a variety of facilitators and modalities, and today a team-based approach continues to integrate arts into settlement and healthcare services, fostering connection, resilience, and community well-being.

Newcomer Artist Training

This introductory course is designed for newcomer artists interested in exploring community arts and facilitation in the Canadian context. Participants learn how to bring their artistic practice into community settings, gaining both creative inspiration and opportunities for professional growth and income.

Mental Health Training for Newcomer Artists

Offered in two intensive sessions to cohorts of 8–15 participants, this training equips newcomer artists with practical skills to support community members experiencing mental health challenges or crises. The program emphasizes trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches in arts-based settings.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Following training, newcomer artists are connected with ongoing updates, news, and opportunities to collaborate as part of interdisciplinary healthcare teams. Participants may engage as contracted artists, contributing their skills to support community well-being and integrated arts-based programming.





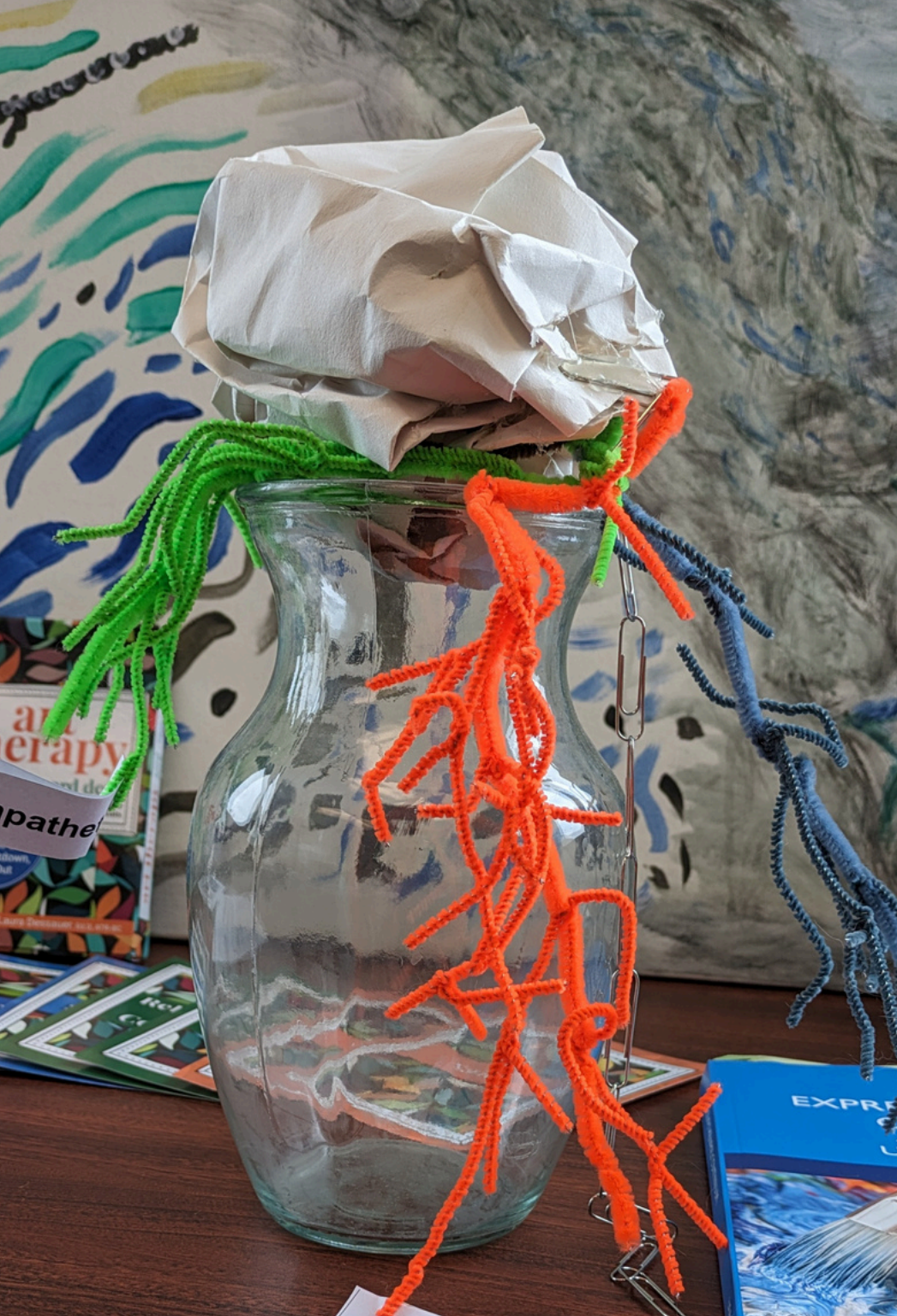
Training Format and Structure

- Training sessions are delivered in a hybrid format, combining virtual and in-person learning.
- Virtual Sessions: Two-hour online sessions on Zoom introduce foundational mental health concepts and practical skills.
- In-Person Sessions: Five-hour in-person sessions focus on applying knowledge and theory through interactive activities.
- Supportive Learning Environment: Breaks are incorporated for reflection and pause, and all art materials and activity handouts are provided.
- Ongoing Mentorship: Participants receive continued guidance and support from both agencies after the training concludes.



“As a facilitator, I'm increasingly searching for better ways of handling people in crisis or pre-crisis. Practical, applicable techniques and approaches are most appreciated.” - Participant

“This was a wonderful training program. It was thoughtful, caring, and very informative. I appreciate the time and thought everyone put in to designing it and delivering it. Thank you!” - Participant



Outcomes:

- Gain a deeper understanding of mental health considerations when working with newcomer populations.
- Increase knowledge of the foundations of psychoeducation and trauma-informed care.
- Practice trauma-informed expressive arts approaches to support participants safely and effectively.
- Develop sensitivity to mental health awareness and cultural considerations with newcomers.
- Engage in discussions with other art-based facilitators on mental health, confidentiality, and disclosure practices.
- Learn from subject matter experts on topics such as somatic resourcing, arts-based mental health education, mind-body connections, trauma, and triggers.

“Understanding the effect of trauma on the body now allows me to be more empathetic as a facilitator. Additionally, I can have a deeper understanding of human behavior and how art can help with self-regulation.” - Participant



Two Session Training

Session 1: Knowledge & Sharing Virtual

- Welcome and Orientation
- Group Guidelines
- Why Art Works to improve Mental Health?
- The Mind & Body Connection
- BREAK
- Trauma & Somatic Resourcing
- Bring your Case Studies!
- Resource & Knowledge Exchange
- Gratitude and Closing

Session 2: Studio and Application In-Person

- Welcome Check In
- Session #1 Recap & Questions
- Trauma Informed Arts Approach
- How manage stress or crisis?
- BREAK
- Being a Mindful Facilitator
- Caring for Ourselves & Self Compassion
- Resource & Knowledge Sharing
- Gratitude and Staying Connected



- Art Materials
- Resource Handouts
- Lunch/Refreshments
- Transportation tokens

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Total of 23 participants.

Languages

- Mandarin (4)
- Cantonese (2)
- Tamil (1)
- Spanish (6)
- French (3)
- Twi (1)
- Turkish (1)

Art Modalities

- Painting, visual arts, and drawing
- Crochet, crafts, handmaking (8)
- Movement, yoga, dance (8)
- Theatre and puppetry (7)
- Storytelling, poetry (8)
- Art installation (1)

What Do Participants Want to Learn More About?

- Need for practical, real-time skills to support participants during emotional escalation
- Strong interest in facilitator self-care, including boundaries and emotional regulation
- Desire for deeper cultural understanding of emotional health across diverse newcomer communities
- Interest in strength-based facilitation that promotes empowerment and resilience—not only trauma
- Need for tools to address social anxiety, depression, migratory grief, identity recovery, conflict management, and de-escalation
- Desire to learn basic mental health principles, including mental-health taboos and best facilitation practices

What Participants Hope to Learn

- Trauma-informed practices
- Using art to support depression, anxiety, and stress
- Understanding grief and mourning
- Building self-esteem, confidence, and resilience through art
- Handling rejection and imposter syndrome
- Crisis intervention best practices
- Mindful facilitation practices
- Art therapy techniques
- Land-based and outdoor programming
- Intergenerational program approaches

Years of Experience

- 3–4 years experience (3)
- 5+ years experience (2)
- Just beginning (8)



WHAT ARE PARTICIPANTS SAYING?

What new knowledge did you gain from the training sessions?

“Polyvagal Theory for Trauma Healing! And practical methods and activities that activate the ladder of healing through the three states.”

“About the sympathetic and parasympathetic system — how and why sometimes we react as we do.”

“I learned that somatic releases can happen in multiple ways, not just movement of the physical body. I learned great meditation and expressive art experiences.”

How will you integrate the knowledge learnt from the training in your own practice as a community leader or newcomer artist?

“This information will greatly strengthen our approaches to community arts work. What we didn't have before is the science of why this works, and now we can make more informed choices that increase our impact.”

“Understanding the effect of trauma on the body now allows me to be more empathetic as a facilitator. I can have a deeper understanding of human behavior and how art can help with self-regulation.”

What other topics or knowledge would you have liked to see in the training?

“I would have loved to know a bit more about how the trauma-healing theories work in everyday practice or with groups, more case studies or examples perhaps.”

“Topics: Adverse Childhood Experiences, how trauma affects folks from systems of oppression such as the 2SLGBTQ+ community.”

“Examples of scientific studies to reinforce the acquired knowledge — and more in the arts that I have almost none.”





Access Alliance
Multicultural Health and Community Services

