

# PEER RESEARCHER HANDBOOK



## Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life (HEAL) Project Peer Researcher Training Handbook

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (Access Alliance) is a community-governed organization that provides primary health care to vulnerable (socially marginalized and medically complex) residents of Toronto with a focus on immigrants, refugees, and racialized communities through an inter-professional team. Primary care and other support services (e.g., counselling/therapy, dietetics, health promotion, settlement, language support, etc.) offered by Access Alliance range from promotion through prevention to intervention. Continuous quality improvement, community-based research, evaluation, and knowledge mobilization constitute essential initiatives of the organization.

In 2004, Access Alliance established a Community-Based Research (CBR) department and is recognized as a sector-leader in CBR for its commitment to scientific rigour and participatory approach. The CBR team co-designed several manuals and tools for conducting collaborative research in partnership with vulnerable communities, empowering them and building their self-efficacy in research and evaluation. These tools are curated to investigate and overcome systemic barriers that marginalized communities face.

### **Objectives**

This handbook aims to provide a comprehensive guide for the Point of Contact (POC) to build their capacity in conducting ethics-informed community-based research for the HEAL project. Included in Handbook:

- Conduct community-based research as a part of the HEAL evaluation cycle
- Recruit and screen prospective participants
- Interview participants
- Conduct arts-based evaluation
- Facilitate group discussions
- Help bridge the gap between the participants and the research, potentially allowing for better rapport building and increased comfort for participants

The work of a Point of Contact highlights the collaborative nature of this research project and creates space for people with lived experience to be involved in the research process.

### **This Handbook Includes:**

- Background information on the HEAL project
- Relevant research guiding the project
- An overview of the evaluation cycle and HEAL curriculum
- Step-by-step guide of the role of the point of contact person during the evaluation cycle
- Information on various data collection methods

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## Orientation

### Access Alliance Overview

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (Access Alliance) is a community health centre serving the most vulnerable immigrants, refugees, and their communities. We provide primary health care services, including health promotion, illness prevention and treatment, chronic disease management, and individual and community capacity building. Our goal is for all individuals who face barriers to good health to have access to high-quality primary healthcare within an integrated healthcare system.

### HEAL Project Overview

Access Alliance will work with point of contact researchers (Point of Contact Person and/or co-facilitators), community members, as well as academic and community organization partners to implement HEAL, an inter-sectoral, creative, culturally safe, multi-pronged capacity-enriching project. This co-design, mixed-method, community-based participation action research is focused on vulnerable newcomer populations who are survivors or at risk of domestic violence in the City of Toronto. The team will develop expressive arts interventions and identify promising or best practices to address the trauma-informed health impacts of family violence and to improve participants' physical and mental well-being. If you need support, please contact: [research@accessalliance.ca](mailto:research@accessalliance.ca)

#### Driving research questions

- Which modalities of Expressive Art Therapy practices can improve the health and well-being of gender-based domestic violence survivors?
- To identify the baseline needs of newcomer survivors of domestic violence.
- What changes can we expect and measure in participants' attitudes, knowledge, and practices during and after their participation in the designed Expressive Arts Therapy curriculum?
- How can successful interventions be scaled up and shared with other organizations?

### Disclosure

This Point of Contact Training Handbook is part of the HEAL Project - Hub of Expressive Arts for Life, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada from April 2022 to December 31, 2025. This "HEAL Point of Contact Training Handbook" was developed by Akm Alamgir, Research Lead, Oeishi Faruquzzaman, Research Fellow and Christen Kong, Project Coordinator.

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## Key Concepts

**Trauma and Violence-Informed Approach:** Newcomers and immigrants may experience unique challenges related to violence that may create additional barriers to effective services and support. Immigration status can heighten vulnerability to violence, for example, immigrant women may be further isolated by being prohibited to learn English or French, or non-status women may be reluctant to report abuse due to fears of deportation or loss of their children.

The Public Health Agency of Canada defines **trauma and violence-informed** approaches as “practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours.” These approaches increase safety, control, and resilience for people seeking services or support related to experiencing violence. The goal of this approach is to cause harm to service users regardless of whether or not you are aware of the service user’s experiences of violence.

**Cultural safety** is defined as “an approach to working across ethnic and other differences to make systems and organizations responsible to ensure that service environments are safe for everyone—regardless of their expressed or assumed culture.” Increasing cultural safety can involve reducing power differences between participants and researchers. As a researcher, your prior experience working with this community or lived experiences helps contribute to feelings of safety for participants.

**Expressive Arts Therapy (EAT)** is a dynamic and creative intervention that utilizes various artistic media to express emotions and enhance self-awareness (Ugurlu et al., 2016). It incorporates non-verbal and verbal art forms, including music, visual arts, and dance (Serlin, 2020). These arts-based approaches, usually facilitated by art therapists and co-facilitated by mental health counsellors or social workers, have significantly provided better mental health outcomes in those with traumatic encounters due to gender-based violence (Bird, 2018; Luzzatto et al., 2021).

**Arts-based evaluation (ABE)** uses creative art activities to express value. Unlike interviews or surveys, they offer an alternative avenue for expressing thoughts and feelings (ArtReach Toronto, 2011). ABE utilizes metaphors as a means to explore topics that may be difficult or uncomfortable to convey in other ways (ArtReach Toronto, 2011). ABE can occur at all stages of a project and may include poetry writing, storytelling, drawing exercises, and the use of sound and movement (ArtReach Toronto, 2011).

## Overview of the Evaluation Cycle

Details	Pre-Program (3 months)	During Program (3 months)			Post Program (6 months)	
<i>The evaluation approach is mixed method, quantitative and qualitative art-based evaluation.</i>						
<b>Outcome Measurement Tools</b>	Recruitment (Flyer) & Screening Questionnaire	Pre-Program Survey	Ending Arts Modality Survey	Post-Program Survey	Follow-up Phone Call one-on-one Interview	Focus Group
<b>Outreach Dissemination</b>	Phone call or in-person	In-person	In-person group	In-person	Phone call	In-person
<b>When Frequency of Implementation</b>	3 months before the program starts	First program session	Session 5 and 10	Last program session (session 11)	3 months following the last session	6 months following the last session
<b>Personnel Engagement</b>	Partner Organization Point of Contact	Point of Contact Art therapist	Point of Contact Art therapist	Point of Contact Art therapist	Partner Organization Point of Contact Research Fellow	Partner Organization Point of Contact Research Fellow
<b>Purpose</b>	Recruitment, outreach to potential participants from the partner organization database  Ongoing screening questionnaires will be used to ensure that participants meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Participants who do not meet the criteria will also be referred to any appropriate support services and resources.	Assess mental health, self-efficacy, and knowledge about healthy relationships, Canadian rights, and support resources before starting the program.	Help participants share their reflections with other group members and facilitators, and provide feedback on the HEAL project.	Assess mental health, self-efficacy, and knowledge about healthy relationships, Canadian rights, support resources after completing the program, and provide feedback on the cultural sensitivity of the program.	Assess the impact of the program after 3 months of completion and if the changes experienced persist.	Assess the impact of the program after 6 months of completion and if the changes experienced persist.
<b>Evaluation Tool</b>	Screening survey (Appendix A & B)	Pre-program survey and concentric circles art activity (Appendix F)	Arts Modality Feedback Survey(Appendix G)	Post-program survey and concentric circles art activity (Appendix H)	3-Month interview guide (Appendix I)	6-Month focus group Guide, rectangle art activity, and poetry activity (Appendix J)

## Point of Contact Position

The point of contact person (Point of Contact Person and/or co-facilitator) will focus on implementing research/evaluation tools to support the Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life (HEAL) Project. The point of contact person will work closely with the Research Fellow and Project Coordinator to complete tasks. Tasks include:

- Attending the Point of Contact Person training facilitated by Access Alliance
- Participate in the “Bridges to Safety” online course for [more information](#)
- Ongoing communications with the HEAL Research Fellow
- Support and manage participant outreach and recruitment
- Conducting phone screening and an eligibility phone call with interested participants
- Conducting in-program evaluation surveys/activities with participants
- Scheduling and conducting interviews and a focus group with participants
- Co-facilitating weekly sessions with the expressive art therapist/arts-based facilitator
- Support HEAL program logistics

## Point of Contact Researcher Overview

Phases	Hours*	Description	Outcomes
<b>Phase 1: Recruitment &amp; Screening</b>  (Phone or in-person)	7-8 hours (2-3 hours for ongoing recruitment strategies and approximately 20 minutes for up to 15 participant intakes)	Recruit participants by distributing the project flyer and screening prospective participants.	Full list of participants
<b>HEAL Program</b> 36 hours (12, 3-hour sessions)			
<b>Phase 3: Pre-Program Survey</b>  (In-person)	20-30 minutes	Assess mental health, self-efficacy, and knowledge about healthy relationships, Canadian rights, and support resources before starting the program.	Completed anonymous survey responses, photos of all art activities, and notes from group discussions.
<b>Phase 4: Art Modality Feedback Survey</b>  (In-person)	1 hour (approximately 15-20 minutes for up to 3 surveys)	Help participants share their reflections with other group members and facilitators, and provide feedback on the HEAL project.	Photos of all art activities and notes from group discussions.
<b>Phase 5: Post-Program Survey</b>  (In-person)	20-30 minutes	Assess mental health, self-efficacy, and knowledge about healthy relationships, Canadian rights, and support resources after completing the program.	Completed anonymous survey responses, photos of all art activities, and notes from group discussions.
<b>Phase 6: 3-Month Phone Call Interview</b>  (Phone)	7.5 hours (approximately 30-minute interviews for up to 15 participants)	Participants reflect on their experiences in the program and assess the impact of the program after three months of completion, as well as whether the changes they experienced persist.	Audio recordings of all interviews.
<b>Phase 7: 6-Month Focus Group</b>  (In-person)	1-1.5 hours (additional 30 minutes for prep)	Assess the impact of the program after 6 months of completion and if the changes experienced persist.	Audio recordings of all interviews and photos of all art activities.

\*Note: The hours for each evaluation task will change depending on the number of participants and the time participants require for activities.

## Training and Certification

The point of contact role at Access Alliance provided opportunities for professional development, both as a researcher and a frontline worker. The following training programs are expected to be completed before the program implementation.

Training Program	Time for Completion	Expected Outcomes
<b>Peer Researcher Training (Access Alliance)</b>	2-3 Hours (Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding of the HEAL Project and the evaluation cycle</li> <li>● Understanding of arts-based evaluation</li> </ul>
<b>TCPS-2 Core Certification</b>	3 Hours (Online, self-paced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding of research and research ethics</li> <li>● Understanding of risks and benefits of research</li> <li>● Understanding of privacy and confidentiality</li> </ul>
<b>Bridge to Safety Online Course</b>	10 Hours (Online, self-paced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Understanding of the root causes of gender based violence</li> <li>● How to be aware and respond to gender based violence</li> </ul>

### **Point of Contact Person Training - Access Alliance**

The Point of Contact Person Training offered by Access Alliance provides an overview of the HEAL program and the responsibilities of the point of contact person. The training comprises three one-hour sessions. Training outcomes include the following:

- A strong understanding of the HEAL project, including the evaluation cycle
- Information on the point of contact role
- A step-by-step guide to the data collection process
- An overview and short demonstration of all arts-based evaluation activities
- Best practices for working with vulnerable populations
- A greater understanding of a typical art therapy session

### **TCPS-2 Core Certification**

Anyone undertaking research in any capacity (student, volunteer, Point of Contact Person, researcher, academic, etc.) must first complete the required TCPS 2 Core certification, which is offered online by the Government of Canada's Research Ethics Board. Regardless of the research methodology, this 8-module course provides guidance on research protocols and ethics for working with human participants.

Create an account and complete each module. On average, it takes 3 hours to complete. However, it is possible to log out and return to the modules at a later time.

The course can be accessed at <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>.

The purpose of this certification is:

- To gain an understanding of what research is, the main principles of research ethics and why they are important
- To understand how to assess the risks and benefits of research
- To understand privacy, confidentiality, and consent in research for a variety of populations and settings
- To understand fairness and equity in the process of conducting research
- To understand that conflicts of interest may arise during research and how to mitigate them
- To understand what the Research Ethics Board (REB) looks for when submitting a research ethics proposal before conducting research

Overall, this certification will enable the point of contact person to be well-equipped to conduct research ethically, with the necessary processes and protocols in place.

### **Bridge to Safety Online Course**

In addition to honing research skills, the Point of Contact person will develop skills as a frontline worker to recognize and address gender based violence. The Bridge to Safety is a free online training course provided by the Gender-Based Violence Settlement Strategy Project. The training course is self-paced and will take approximately 10 hours to complete.

Point of contact researchers can register for the course at <https://www.ngbv.ca/online-course>

#### **Through this course, researchers will learn:**

- The root causes of gender-based violence, as well as the many diverse forms it can take
- Key frameworks, approaches, and strategies that allow individuals and organizations to meet better the unique needs of newcomers, immigrants and refugees who have experienced violence
- How to recognize and respond to gender-based violence, including how to respond to disclosures, recognize warning signs, safety planning, and risk assessment.
- Strategies for working collaboratively between sectors and mapping out resources in your community to develop a shared base of knowledge

Overall, the course is an opportunity for professional development and provides the point of contact person with foundational skills to work with the implementation population for the HEAL project.

# Data Collection Stages (Step-by-Step Guide)

Please see [Appendix A](#) for a checklist of tasks.

## Step 1: Recruitment & Screening Participants (In-Person or Phone)

### Distribution of Flyer

The first step in implementing the program is finding eligible participants. Recruitment flyers should be distributed both within Access Alliance and the partnered organization. This includes distributing flyers within the organization's building(s) and on social media, if possible.

The recruitment flyer will have the contact information (email and/or phone number) of the point of contact person referred by the partnering organizations.

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Coordinate with HEAL's project coordinator to ensure recruitment flyers are distributed

If you have any questions related to the project, please refer to Appendix G.

### Screening Participants

Prospective participants will contact the point of contact person through both in-person and phone. The point of contact person must screen all prospective participants over the phone to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements of the research program.

The eligibility criteria include:

- Identifying as a newcomer/immigrant (arrived in Canada within the last 5 years)
- Identify as a woman
- 18 years or older
- Survivor of domestic violence
- Not currently experiencing abuse or violence\*

\**Note:* participants who are currently experiencing abuse or violence are not eligible for the current program and need to refer to appropriate crisis support. See [Appendix I](#) for referrals to crisis support.

If participants meet this eligibility criterion, the point of contact person will inquire about current supports/resources that the participant is accessing and make any necessary referrals. Participants may also require interpretation services. See [Appendix G](#) for more information on Access Alliance's interpretation service, Riomix.

Afterwards, the participant will be sent the HEAL program schedule.

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Regularly check email and phone for prospective participants
- Respond to emails and phone calls to screen prospective participants (*Note:* If participants email the Point of Contact person, arrange a time for a quick conversation and conduct the screening over the phone)
- Share details regarding the first session of the program, i.e., date, time, and location

## Step 2: Pre-Program Survey (In-Person)

We will gather baseline data from participants during the first HEAL session through a survey and an arts-based evaluation activity. The information from these evaluation tools will provide baseline information that we can then compare and reflect on at the end of the program. This activity will take about 30 minutes. For information on data storage, see [Appendix G](#).

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Provide participants with a reminder of the first session of the program (recommended 2-3 days prior)
- Print up to 15 copies of the baseline survey
- Arrive at the session 15 minutes early to prep the arts-based evaluation activity
- After orientation and introductions are complete, distribute the survey (*Note: Remind participants that responses are anonymous*)
- Distribute paper and writing utensils for the evaluation activity
- Alongside any Access Alliance volunteers and placement students, take notes of participant responses
- After the evaluation activity, ensure photos of the evaluation activity are taken and artworks are labelled with the participant's name or initials.
- Archive the art activities and activity notes

For more information on conducting arts-based evaluation, see [Appendix C](#).

## Step 3: Ending Arts Modality Survey (In-Person)

Throughout the HEAL program, we will conduct brief feedback surveys at the end of each arts modality, including visual art and performing arts. These surveys enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of various art modalities and ensure that the HEAL program is meeting the needs of its participants. This activity will take about 10-15 minutes. For information on data storage, see [Appendix F](#).

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Prepare five large papers with the five reflection questions as directed in the evaluation tool
- Arrive at the session 15 minutes early to prep the arts-based evaluation activity
- Alongside any Access Alliance volunteers and placement students, take notes of participant responses
- After the evaluation activity, ensure photos of the evaluation activity are taken
- Archive the art activities and activity notes

For more information on conducting arts-based evaluation, please see [Appendix C](#).

#### **Step 4: Post-Program Survey (In-Person)**

This survey mirrors the “**Pre-Program Survey**”. Participants will complete the same survey questions and also participate in an arts-based evaluation activity, which will include different qualitative questions to answer. The purpose of this survey is to determine whether participants have reported any changes since completing the baseline survey. This helps us know if the program is creating any positive (or negative) changes for the participant. This activity will take about 15-20 minutes. For information on data storage, see [Appendix F](#).

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Print up to 15 copies of the post-program survey
- Arrive at the session 15 minutes early to prep for the arts-based evaluation activity
- Before the final art show, distribute the survey (Note: Remind participants that responses are anonymous)
- Distribute paper and writing utensils for the evaluation activity
- Alongside any Access Alliance volunteers and placement students, take notes of participant responses
- After the activity, ensure photos of the evaluation activity are taken and artworks are labelled with the participant’s name or initials. Archive the art activities and activity notes.

For more information on conducting arts-based evaluation, please see [Appendix C](#).

#### **Step 6: 3-Month Follow-Up Interview (Phone)**

After the completion of the program, we would like to receive feedback on the program and determine if the research project has created any long-term changes or insights experienced by participants. As a result, we will reach out to conduct phone call interviews three months after the program's completion. The Point of Contact person does not need to schedule these interviews in advance. They will call participants and ask if they are available for the interview. If the participant is unable, they will schedule a time to call them back. The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded. For information on data recording and storage, see [Appendix G](#).

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Call participants between 11:00 am and 5:00 pm, or the specified time identified by participants
- Ask participants if they are available and in a safe space to speak.
- Record the interview if permission is given (if participants do not allow permission for the interview, the point of contact will take notes of the interview)
- Provide the participant with the date for an upcoming focus group
- Archive the audio recording of the interview (labelled with time, date)

For more information on practical interview skills and tips, refer to [Appendix B](#).

### **Step 7: 6-Month Focus Group (In-Person)**

The final step in the data collection process is the focus group, which will take place six months after the program's completion. Similar to the 3-month follow-up, this is another opportunity to assess the changes resulting from the program, allowing participants to reconnect with one another and engage in group discussions. For information on data recording and storage, see [Appendix G](#).

Responsibilities of the Point of Contact role:

- Provide participants with a reminder of the interview before the day (recommended 2-3 days before the focus group)
- Arrive at the session 15 minutes early to prep arts-based evaluation activities
- Record the focus group if permission is given (if participants do not allow permission for the interview, the Point of Contact person will take notes of the interview)
- Distribute sticky notes, paper and writing utensils for evaluation activities
- Alongside any Access Alliance volunteers and placement students, take notes of participant responses
- After the activity, ensure photos of the evaluation activity are taken
- Share any upcoming social events after the end of the focus group
- Archive the art activities, activity notes, and audio (labelled with time, date)

For more information on effective focus group moderating, refer to [Appendix D](#).

## Appendix A: Point of Contact Person CHECKLIST

HEAL Cycle Item	Materials/Resources	Status of Completion
<b>PRE-PROGRAM</b>		
Point of Contact Person Training	Paper and writing utensil(s)	
TCPS-2 Core Certification	<a href="#">Course Website</a>	
Bridge to Safety Online Course	<a href="#">Course Website</a>	
Identify the location, date, and time for the program	Connect with the Project Coordinator and the Partner Organization	
Distribution of HEAL Program Poster	HEAL Program Outreach Poster	
<b>DURING PROGRAM</b>		
Review Consent Form (Session 1)	HEAL Consent Form	
Pre-Program Survey (Session 1)	Pre-Program Survey Large sheets of paper Writing utensils	
Feedback Survey (Session 4/7)	Large sheets of paper Writing utensils	
Schedule Focus Group	None.	
Post Program Survey	Large sheets of paper Writing utensils	
<b>POST PROGRAM</b>		
3-Month Follow-Up Phone Call	Audio recorder Interview Guide	
Send a reminder for the focus group	None.	
6-Month Follow-Up Focus Group	Audio recorder Focus group guide Large sheets of paper Writing utensils Sticky notes Matt and/or shawl	

## Appendix B: Conducting Interviews

As the point of contact person, you will conduct interviews throughout the program, specifically during the screening stage and a three-month follow-up. As a community-based researcher working with vulnerable populations, it is essential to take steps to ensure that you create a safe and comfortable environment for participants (Access Alliance, 2011).

Your role as an interviewer will involve:

- Greet participants
- Set tone and build rapport
- Gently ask questions, probe, and follow up
- Ask all the questions in the guide
- Focus on active listening and responding appropriately
- Jot down keywords to trigger follow-up questions

Below are eight guiding principles to keep in mind when interviewing (Access Alliance, 2011).

<b>Gentle</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Allows participants to complete what they are saying, which enables them to proceed at their own pace of thinking and speaking.</li><li>● Interviewers often ask questions that the participant has never given much thought to or has difficulty sharing.</li><li>● Allow for silences and be comfortable with silences.</li></ul>
<b>Sensitive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Listen actively to the content of what is said, hear the many nuances of meaning in an answer, and seek to get the nuances of meaning described more fully. It is essential to pay attention to what is said, as well as how it is said, and what is not said, in order to comprehend the interview fully.</li><li>● It is important to manage your own emotional reactions to what you are hearing and/or can relate to.</li></ul>
<b>Open</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hear which aspects of the interview topic are important for the participants. The participants, undoubtedly, have had many fascinating experiences in their lives, but the interviewer's job is to focus on the central questions/issues associated with the interview.</li><li>● While it is essential to explore new topics as they arise during an interview, the interviewer must avoid leading the participant off-topic.</li></ul>
<b>Steering</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Have a general sense of what information will be relevant. The interviewer controls the course of the interview and is not afraid of interrupting digressions from the participant.</li><li>● However, interviewers need to avoid pushing participants to a specific answer.</li></ul>
<b>Critical</b>

- Does not take everything that is said at face value, but questions critically to make sure participants are clear about what they are saying. Sometimes participants can become confused about events, emotions or situations.
- The interviewer's job is to remember, or write down, enough of the important points to aid in factual checking/probing throughout the interview.

#### Remembering

- Retains what a participant has said during the interview.
- Can recall earlier statements and ask to have them elaborated
- Can relate what has been said during different parts of the interview to each other (themes).

#### Interpreting

- Manages the interview to clarify and expand on the meanings of the participants' statements.
- Provides interpretations of what is said, which may then be disconfirmed or confirmed by the participant.

#### Knowledgeable

- Your probes will be much more effective, and you can spend more time on new and emerging data if you have a well-established knowledge base.
- Review interview questions ahead of time
- Re-read transcripts before your second interview

### Probing

While we have provided an interview guide for each interview in the evaluation cycle, there may be times when you have to probe participants (Access Alliance, 2011). Probing allows for:

- Increase the depth of content & clarity
- Find reasons, causes, and links
- Capture feelings, perspectives and opinions
- Get back on track

Probing helps guide the interview and allows for richer data; however, it is also important to consider the times when it may be inappropriate. For example, we do not want participants to recount past experiences of gender-based violence, as it may be potentially triggering to participants. Similarly, if a participant is not staying on topic despite attempts to get back on track, it may be more appropriate to skip the question altogether. Examples of probing include:

- "Can you tell me more about..."
- "Can you describe..."
- "When did this happen..."

### Tips for Conducting Phone Interviews (Azad et al., 2-21)

- Be clear on the purpose of the interview
- Let participants know that silence during the interview should be interpreted as an indication of active listening on the part of the interviewer.
- As an interviewer is unable to portray body language, it is essential to find alternative ways to demonstrate that they are listening, for example, by summarizing the participant's responses.

## Appendix C: Conducting Arts-Based Evaluation

Arts-based evaluation (ABE) uses creative art activities to express value. Unlike interviews or surveys, they offer an alternative avenue for expressing thoughts and feelings (ArtReach Toronto, 2011). They can foster group discussion and a sense of group belonging (ArtReach Toronto, 2011). In the HEAL project, arts-based evaluations will be employed at the beginning, during, and at the conclusion of the program. Arts-based evaluations can help the group gain insight into how the program is progressing, how participants are feeling, and what adjustments are needed.

### Arts-based evaluations (ArtReach Toronto, 2011):

- Encourage multiple ways of expression
- Express complex ideas
- Encourage participants to share their feelings
- Give a quick snapshot of where a group is at
- Generate materials (poems, drawings, collages, etc.) to be used in final reports

### Materials for Arts-Based Evaluation

Activity	Materials
Concentric circles activity	Large papers, writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers, oil pastels)
Interactive group discussion	5 large sheets of paper, writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers, oil pastels)
Sticky note activity	Post-it notes, five large sheets of paper, writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers, oil pastels)
Collective poetry activity	3 matts/shawls, strips of paper, writing utensils (pens, pencils, markers, oil pastels)

### Things to keep in mind during the arts-based evaluations:

- Always allow for group discussions at the end of the activity
- The process of participating in the activity is as important as the final product; ensure that note-takers are available to take notes during the discussion.
- Take the time to practice these art activities ahead of the session to ensure they run smoothly.

## Appendix D: Conducting Focus Groups

Focus groups are facilitated group discussions that enable participants to express their opinions and ideas both individually and collectively. Focus groups can provide not only rich data from a group of people, but also data uniquely generated by participants discussing issues in a group setting. While discussing issues in a group setting with skilled facilitators can encourage participants to share more fully, generating unique data not accessible by other methods, the group setting can also inhibit participants from disclosing certain types of personal and sensitive information. Researchers also need to pay extra attention to confidentiality issues to prevent personal identifiers and sensitive information from being spread beyond the focus group setting.

Designing and conducting good focus groups is not a simple task; researchers need specific skills (such as group facilitation skills) and tools, and need to pay attention to unique logistical details (such as coordinating a group meeting or recording data in a group setting, etc.). Training and preparation become key factors in implementing a focus group, one of several considerations when planning a focus group.

### The strengths of the focus group include:

- Group settings can stimulate ideas, thoughts, and memories as participants interact, reflect, and build on what is said in the group.
- Participants (and researchers) may learn about shared concerns/perspectives or about unique concerns/perspectives of other participants.
- The facilitator can probe and follow up on comments, which is especially important for unanticipated comments. This is also true with interviews, but not with surveys.
- Focus groups can become a “forum for change” that “empowers” participants, such as by helping them be more comfortable speaking in public and advocating for change (Gibbs, 1997)

### Key Elements for a Good Focus Group

- **Time** – keep it short: The focus group should stay under 2 hours to allow for fatigue and to avoid potential fatigue that can set in with longer sessions
- **Location/setup** – in a circle: A circle seating arrangement enables all participants to see each other and interact through dialogue.
- **Design** – good planning is required: Aside from asking the right questions, other tools and strategies can encourage discussions, including establishing ground rules, scheduling possible breaks, and allocating time to discuss consent and other logistics.
- **Facilitation process** – be prepared: The facilitator should be familiar with the topic and be capable of creating a familiar and relaxed atmosphere.
- **Ethics** – be aware of limitations: Facilitators should clearly communicate the scope of the research, the rights of participants, and the option to withdraw from the focus groups.
- **After the focus group**, the data should be labelled with time, date, and location of the focus group.

## Asking Questions in a Focus Group

Most focus groups follow a set of questions with opportunities to “probe” for more answers. The facilitator will often have a set script of questions, typically with prompts to elicit more details or additional viewpoints.

Asking Questions Do's	Asking Questions Don'ts
Ask “How”?	Ask many yes or no questions
Follow up if you are unclear—“ Will you tell me more about that?”	Ask more than one question at a time.
Ask for specifics if you get a very general response to a question	Ask leading questions (“Isn’t it true that YYY is important?”)
Ask others in the group what their views are when you have only heard one person’s opinion	“Correct people” or tell them they are wrong about something
Seek out input from all participants	Be afraid of asking for clarification
Ask if the process is clear	Pressure someone to speak

## Facilitation Tips for Focus Groups

- **Be your own facilitator.** There are many different styles of facilitation, even by the same facilitator.
- **Use notes.** There is nothing wrong with being transparent about the use of facilitator notes, especially when facilitating an exercise.
- **Pay attention to your personal presentation (body language & tone).** A facilitator spends much time being the focus of attention. How you present yourself is very important. Make sure people know you are listening – nod and affirm that you have heard them. Appear relaxed and use a positive tone.
- **Name issues of tension.** It can cause much anxiety if a facilitator does not acknowledge the tension that has arisen in a group. Once the issue is named, it can be dealt with, such as taking a set amount of time to deal with it (“let us give this five more minutes and then move on”), or “We are hearing a lot of passionate opinions right now. Let us remember to keep it focused on the issues and not each other.” If there is an emerging conflict, name it. “There seems to be some disagreement here.”
- **Use the process to help address conflict.** Group guidelines in place for participation. If emotions and conflict are escalating, you can use the guidelines to bring things under control.
- **Do not take the process personally.** If participants are expressing concern with the process, it is either because it has not been explained well or it is not meeting their needs and desires. If your explanation has not been clear, just apologize and clarify.
- **Do not be afraid of silence.** If you do not receive a response right away to a question, resist the urge to re-ask the question or move on immediately. Let people think for a moment.
- **Encourage participation by everyone.** Sometimes, a participant may be hesitant to speak, or there may be one or two participants who are dominating the discussion. The moderator can say, “I would like to hear from some folks who have not spoken in a while.”

## Appendix E: Best Practices for Working with Vulnerable Populations

Do's and don'ts of working with survivors of gender based violence (JSI, 2020; Witness Gender Based Violence, 2016)

Do's	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explain who you are, including your role and responsibilities</li><li>● Remind participants that you are there to support them</li><li>● Create open-ended questions and probes to capture the complete answers of the participants</li><li>● Use simple language</li><li>● Be conscious of your word choices</li><li>● Be patient</li><li>● Highlight the options and resources available to the participant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Directly or indirectly blame participants by implying they could have prevented, avoided, or resisted incidents of GBV</li><li>● Use offensive, rude, or shaming language</li><li>● Interrupt the participant when they are talking</li><li>● Repeat the same question; instead, try to rephrase it or skip it if necessary.</li></ul>

## **Appendix F: Interpretation Program: Riomix**

As the HEAL project is working with newcomer women, there may be times when the point of contact person needs to use Access Alliance's interpretation program, Riomix. Riomix is an online and phone interpretation service. To access the service, you will need the Riomix ID below.

**Riomix ID:** 252794

For conversations under 30 minutes, you can directly connect with Riomix for an interpretation; for conversations over 30 minutes, you must book the interpretation service ahead of time. Please use the intake process as an opportunity to ask if interpretation is required.

### **Step-by-Step Guide**

1. Go to: <https://riocall.ca/>
2. In the audio tab, search for the language of interest.
3. Enter the Riomix ID (252794).

For more information on using Riomix, please visit this link.

## **Appendix G: Recording & Data Storage**

### **Recording Interviews/Focus Groups**

With the participant's permission, all interviews and the 6-month focus group will be recorded. The point of contact person will be provided with a recorder. When conducting recorded sessions, they should call participants and put them on the speaker for recording. The point of contact person should find a quiet and private space to conduct interviews.

### **Data Storage**

It is essential that, after every stage of the evaluation cycle, the data collected is protected and stored securely. Please follow the steps below to store audio recorders, documents, photos, and other items appropriately. The majority of data collection materials will be in hard copy format. The Research Fellow and Project Coordinator will schedule regular meetings with the point of contact person to collect data. The point of contact person should identify a secure storage space to store the data before the Access Alliance research team retrieves it.

### **Audio Recordings**

Access Alliance will provide audio recorders. The project team will provide training on using audio recorders before interviews. All audio recordings should be labelled in the same manner: PeerResearcherLastName\_Tool#\_Year, for example: Smith\_Tool1\_2022.

### **Arts-Based Evaluations**

The point of contact person will be given a camera to document all the arts-based evaluation artworks. At the end of each arts-based evaluation activity, the point of contact person, volunteer, or placement student will take photos of the entire arts-based evaluation activity. Ensure that all artworks are labelled with the participant's name or initials. We want to ensure that we can connect the participant's artworks with any relevant group discussion notes. This is particularly important for the pre- and post-surveys.

### **Hardcopy Documents** (Informed Consent and Demographic Survey)

The consent forms and demographic surveys will be in hard copy. Additionally, notes taken during group discussions should also be in hard copy to avoid security and confidentiality issues that can arise from sending data online. Store all hard-copy documents at the designated location for pickup.

### **Online Survey** (Pre-/Post-Program Survey)

The pre-program and post-program surveys will be conducted on SurveyMonkey and completed on an iPad. Participants will take turns to complete the survey online. Once the survey is completed, please store the iPad away safely.

## Appendix H: Commonly Asked Questions from Participants

Possible questions from participants	Possible responses
What do I have to do?	We are looking for participants for an expressive arts program. The project will involve participating in a 12-week arts program, where you will engage in arts activities, receive psychoeducation and safety information, and learn about your rights in Canada. In addition to the arts program, you will also be participating in an interview before and after the program, as well as a three-month phone call and six six-month focus groups. These interviews will help us gain insight into your experiences in the program.
Will people know I participated in this?	All research data and reports will be anonymous, meaning we will not use your name. The information will also be protected. However, the program will involve other community members who may not keep things confidential, although we will ask them to do so.
Why would I want to do this?	Different people will have different reasons, and that is okay. We are conducting research in the hopes of supporting other newcomer or immigrant women. Your participation will help us with the research.
What is it for? Why are you doing this?	The HEAL project aims to deliver interdisciplinary, expressive arts programs to six groups of newcomers who are at risk of or have previously experienced family violence. The purpose of this project is to create better support for women experiencing domestic violence and potentially create policy-level changes as well.
Who is doing this?	This project is in collaboration between Access Alliance and [partnered organization].
Are you getting paid to do this?	You will not be paid for participating in the arts program; however, we will be providing TTC allowance and childcare during the program to make it easier for you to participate. Additionally, you will be compensated for participating in the 6-month focus group. You will be compensated at a rate of \$50 per hour.
What if I go and I do not like it?	Your participation is entirely voluntary; you are under no obligation to stay.
Can I tell people about it?	You can inform people that we are conducting research, but we kindly request that anyone participating in the program keep the discussions confidential. We will keep everyone's information confidential.
Who gets to control the research – who owns it?	A research committee, comprising community members, academics, and representatives from community agencies, will have access to the raw data and will produce a report. They are the ones who ensure your identity is protected, including your name and any information that might reveal who you are (e.g., a volunteer position at a local centre). The report will be released to the public, who can use it for free.
How will I be informed about the research being conducted?	You will receive a draft of the final report once it is completed. We will send this draft to everyone to allow for feedback. It will also be available online afterwards.

## Appendix I: Referrals

Part of the role of the point of contact person is to connect prospective participants to appropriate support and resources. As mentioned, this study excludes women who are currently experiencing domestic abuse, as crisis support is better suited for them. Below are some readily available crisis support hotlines for women experiencing abuse.

*Note:* As programming may not be consistent throughout the year, we will send an updated referral sheet with a comprehensive list of resources and support for newcomer women experiencing abuse.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Telephone Number</b>
<b>Victim Services High Risk Support Services</b>	Domestic Violence Emergency Response Services assists with safety plans, advocacy, and court accompaniment.	416-808-7077
<b>Distress Centres of Toronto</b>	24/7 support for crisis and emotional support, suicide prevention.	416-408-4357
<b>The Assaulted Women's Helpline</b>	Anonymous and confidential 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis telephone line to all women in the province of Ontario who have experienced any form of abuse.	416-863-0511
<b>Victim's Support Line</b>	Connect to programming and support.	416-314-2447
<b>Toronto Rape Crisis Centre</b>	A trained and experienced peer counsellor is available to speak with any survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and their supporters, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.	416-597-8808
<b>Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centre of Peel</b>	24/7 hotline for sexual assault/rape victims.	905 895-7313

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