



12TH ANNUAL FRIENDS OF PCHS EVENT

REPORT

November 29, 2025

pchs.ca



Welcome & Introduction

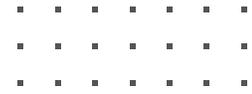


At Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS), compassion drives our purpose and community shapes our work. Each year, we stand alongside individuals, families, and seniors, supporting them through life's challenges and empowering them to thrive.

This report highlights the action taken on the clients' recommendations during last fiscal year and the feedback received from the community to meet their needs.

Together, we are shaping a healthier, stronger, and more connected community.

Land Acknowledgement



We acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Long before today, Indigenous peoples have been the stewards of these lands. We also acknowledge the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Indigenous peoples in Ontario continue to care for this land and shape our province.

We recognize that these lands, both historically and currently, have been the home and gathering places of many Indigenous people from various Nations across Turtle Island. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and meet in this territory. We show our respect to the Indigenous Peoples of this land today and all days.



We stand in solidarity with murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, transgender and Two-Spirited people, and we affirm our commitment to heartfelt reconciliation.

Friends of PCHS Report

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Executive Summary



On **November 29, 2025**, Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) hosted its 12th Annual Friends of PCHS event. Led by the Board of Directors and the Executive Team, this half-day event was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- **PCHS Services Overview:** To provide attendees with a comprehensive overview of PCHS programs and services.
- **Enable Meaningful Engagement:** To create a platform for meaningful interaction between PCHS and its clients, stakeholders, and community members to foster open communication and gather feedback.
- **Collect Community Insights:** Collect insights and recommendations from a broad range of participants to enhance service quality, address emerging community needs, and promote a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.
- **Align with Strategic Priorities (2023-2027):** Ensure that PCHS's 2023–2027 strategic priorities continue to be informed by input from service users, stakeholders, and community members.
- **Recognizing Volunteers for their contributions:** Acknowledging volunteers reinforces their value to the organization and fosters ongoing commitment.

Through facilitated group discussions, the event attendees were engaged to share their insights on the challenges faced by the South Asian community pertaining to (i) seniors, (ii) addictions, (iii) marginalized newcomer population and (iv) mental health. The recommendations received from each of the four groups are broadly classified into different categories of PCHS strategic plan 2023-2027 and the key objectives based on the three pillars: Sustain, Grow and Expand.

PCHS will develop a work plan to address the issues identified by the participants at the Friends of PCHS event. It is suggested that, based on the decision-making matrix (DMM), this work plan be embedded into the organization's strategic plan implementation framework for 2023-2027 and Continuous improvement plan 2025.

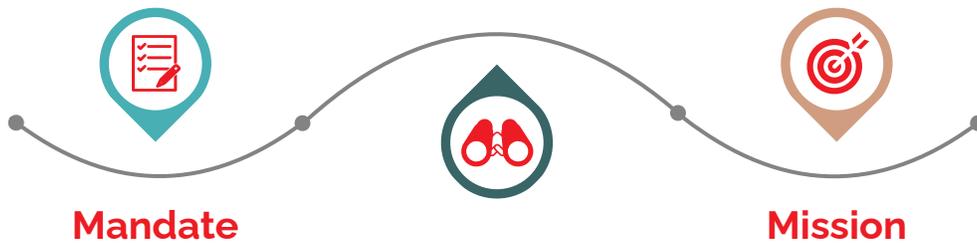


About PCHS

Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) is a pioneer, community-based, not-for-profit charitable organization that has been serving diverse populations for over 35 years. PCHS provides a wide range of culturally responsive services in the areas of addictions, mental health, geriatric care, health promotion, domestic violence, parenting, settlement, and support for women, children, and youth. PCHS is widely recognized for its innovative Integrated Holistic Service Delivery Model and has contributed to several community-based research studies. The organization is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International and Imagine Canada, reflecting its commitment to quality and accountability. PCHS is also a 2SLGBTQ-sensitive organization, committed to equity, inclusion, and culturally appropriate care.

Vision

Our vision is to have healthy and thriving diverse communities.



The mandate of Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) is to provide culturally and linguistically responsive health, social, and newcomer settlement services to equity deserving populations.

To support and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities using an inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility framework (IDEA).

Inclusion

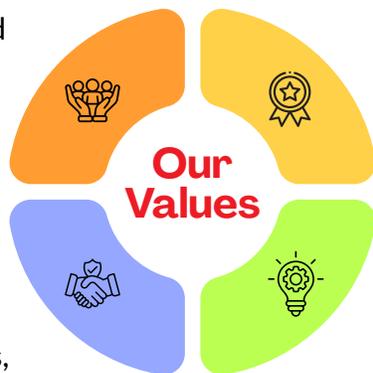
We believe in treating people fairly and with dignity. We strive to incorporate equity in all areas of our work.

Excellence

We believe excellence is a habit, not a one-time action. We are fueled by our relentless pursuit to exceed the expectations of the people we serve.

Accountability

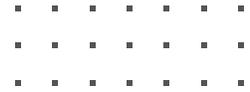
We believe our biggest asset is the trust of our clients, community, donors, funders, and staff. We practice accountability by being open, transparent and responsible in everything we do.



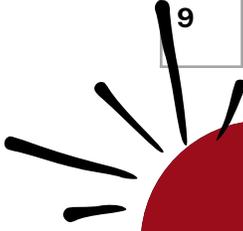
Innovation

We believe that to discover new solutions, we must have the courage to challenge the status quo. We seek out creative approaches to address emerging challenges.

Friends of PCHS- Agenda



1	Registration, Lunch and Networking.
2	Welcome Remarks and Land Acknowledgements.
3	Overview of 'Friends of PCHS'
4	PCHS Overview
5	Volunteer Recognition
6	Friends of PCHS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporting back on 2024 event.• Objectives of today's event.
7	Facilitated Discussion (breaking out into groups).
8	Groups Report Back
9	Next Steps and Concluding Remarks



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- 12th Annual Friends of PCHS Event
- Total attendance of 109 participants
- 60 % of service users, community partners, and stakeholders
- 4 facilitated group discussions on addictions, mental health, seniors, and the marginalized newcomer population
- 9 Volunteers recognized for their valuable contributions

Reporting Back on the 2024 Event

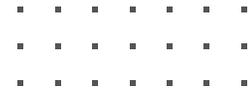


SHAPED BY YOUR VOICES TO STRENGTHEN OUR SERVICES
2024

WHAT YOU TOLD US:	WHAT WE DID:	STATUS:
<p>Raise awareness of programs and services and leverage “meet me where I am” approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted extensive outreaches across the community. • Provided Sessions across multiple platforms to improve accessibility. • Adopted and implemented the “Meet Me Where I Am” approach to reduce barriers. 	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Ensure programs and services including outreach activities that are culturally linguistically tailored and age appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued delivering age appropriate, linguistically, and culturally safe services. • Engaged communities through inclusive practices. 	<p>On-going</p>
<p>Address clients’ psychosocial concerns such as fear and stigma of seeking help for their needs through psychoeducation and counseling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed clients psychosocial concerns such as fear and stigma through psychoeducation, counseling, and group support. • Offered on-going mental health referrals and support. • Provided dedicated senior support, community wellness workshops. 	<p>On-going</p>
<p>Deliver digital literacy and training to access PCHS programs, hybrid health education workshops.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided digital literacy tools and virtual wellness sessions. • Offered practical technology training, including tablet use and digital navigation. • Supported clients in accessing hybrid workshops and online services. 	<p>On-going</p>

For more details, refer to Report Card in Appendices

Methodology Used



Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) hosted a half-day engagement event with service users, community partners, and stakeholders to enhance awareness of PCHS and gather feedback on the emerging needs and challenges faced by the South Asian community across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The event began with lunch and networking, after which **Board President and Chair, Arshdeep Phagoora**, welcomed attendees with his opening remarks.

Following the welcome address, **Chief Executive Officer Amandeep Kaur**, delivered an overview of the organization, highlighting PCHS’s growth and journey over the past 35+ years, its programs and services, and the purpose of the “Friends of PCHS” initiative. She underscored the importance of seeking input from persons served, stakeholders, and the broader community, and integrating this feedback into program design, planning, evaluation, and ongoing quality improvement.

A volunteer recognition segment was then led by Board Members and the Peer Support Coordinator Rasham Sandhu. Subsequently, Amanjit Kahlon, Director of Community Development, presented a report on the work accomplished based on the action items and feedback collected during the 2023 and 2024 ‘Friends of PCHS events’ respectively. He also outlined the objectives of the current session and introduced the focus group questions.

Attendees were divided into four groups; each was assigned a distinct focus area but provided with the same set of guiding questions. PCHS staff and volunteers facilitated the discussions and documented the feedback. After 45 minutes of focused dialogue, each group presented the inputs gathered to the larger audience.

Key Groups & Discussion Questions



A. Group 1-Seniors:

I.What are the key barriers/challenges do seniors experience in accessing culturally responsive health and social services, and how can PCHS better address these challenges?

II.How can PCHS and the use of technology enhance access, safety, and overall well-being for seniors?

B. Group 2-Addictions:

I.What are the key barriers/challenges do individuals affected by the substance use encounter in accessing culturally responsive health and social services, and how can PCHS better address these challenges?

II.How can PCHS and the use of technology enhance access, safety, and overall well-being for this population?

C. Group 3-Mental Health:

I.What are the key barriers/challenges do individuals with MH concerns experience in accessing culturally responsive health and social services, and how can PCHS better address these challenges?

II.How can PCHS and the use of technology enhance access, safety, and overall well-being for them?

D. Group 4-Marginalized Newcomer Population:

I.What are the key barriers/challenges do marginalize newcomer population face in accessing culturally responsive settlement and social services, and how can PCHS better address these challenges?

II.How can PCHS and the use of technology enhance access, safety, and overall well-being for the newcomers?

Program Impact Analyst was engaged to analyze the feedback collected and compile the findings in the form a report.

Feedback Received



GROUP 1- SENIORS

Group 1 at the Friends of PCHS event focused on the challenges currently experienced by the South Asian seniors in the GTA. Following is a non-exhaustive list (not in any specific order) of the needs and issues identified by the group participants.

- Seniors face challenges accessing recreational centres, seniors' clubs, and cultural programs during winter due to service pauses or transportation difficulties. Limited accessible housing, long hospital wait times, and difficulties finding walk-in clinics or regular primary care providers further restrict their engagement with essential services.
- Experiences of racism, lack of cultural representation in programs, language barriers, and difficulties with digital tools (e.g., self-checkout machines) affect seniors' sense of inclusion and independence. Limited digital literacy and the need for culturally sensitive health and mental health education add to these challenges.
- PCHS can provide year-round seniors' activities, dedicated indoor spaces for cultural and recreational programs, weekly health education classes accessible mental health and counselling sessions, and organized seniors' trips. Healthier snack options at events and programs that promote cultural representation can enhance engagement and well-being.
- Engagement with consulates, community leaders, and volunteers can strengthen cultural bridging, inclusion, and advocacy. Programs that encourage participation, feedback, and peer support will empower seniors and help address social isolation.
- Seniors can benefit from basic and short-term crash courses in digital skills to navigate services, use online tools, and access information independently. Support with technology enhances participation in programs and increases autonomy in daily tasks.
- Digital platforms can provide health education content, mental health resources, and program schedules in language-appropriate formats. Online sign-ups, app notifications, and multilingual guides improve awareness of programs, workshops, and community activities, ensuring seniors remain connected and informed.

Feedback Received

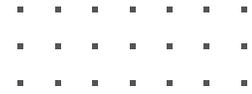


GROUP 2- ADDICTIONS

The group 2 focused on the addiction-related challenges currently experienced by the South Asians in the GTA. Following is a non-exhaustive list (not in any specific order) of the needs and issues identified by the group participants.

- Individuals experience strong judgment from family and community, resulting in shame, fear of ridicule, and hesitation to seek help. Many feel isolated due to limited emotional support at home and misconceptions—such as the belief that quitting drugs is “easy.” Fear and uncertainty about relapse further discourage engagement. The absence of a supportive environment makes it difficult to break the cycle of use, particularly when individuals remain focused on obtaining substances and experience weakened judgment due to addiction.
- Participants reported insufficient access to language-appropriate and culturally responsive counselling, as well as a high need for counsellors who understand South Asian cultural norms and provide culturally familiar emotional connection. PCHS’s website currently lacks South Asian-language resources, limiting accessibility. Broader gaps include the absence of South Asian-specific residential treatment options, low awareness of available PCHS services, and a lack of clear goal-setting guidelines or structured recovery pathways.
- It was suggested that PCHS can expand programs that address overall well-being, such as sessions focusing on time management, family bonding, and essential life skills—not solely on substance cessation. Incorporating spiritual care, meditation, and relaxation practices can enhance cultural alignment. Supporting clients in developing personal motivation for recovery, while increasing family involvement in treatment plans, was highlighted as essential. Expanding culturally and linguistically aligned counselling will help reduce stigma and improve client engagement.
- Participants emphasized the need for stronger promotion of PCHS resources through websites, social media, and community-reaching strategies. This includes not only describing what services exist but explaining how PCHS delivers them. Translating online materials into South Asian languages, offering clear recovery guidelines, and increasing community awareness sessions are critical. Expanding partnerships with nurses, police, pharmacies, and walk-in clinics can broaden visibility. Additionally, targeted support for international students—who are often isolated, misinformed, and vulnerable to harmful influences—remains an important area for development.
- Expand technology-driven and community-based services to improve access and recovery outcomes. This includes a mobile app for relapse prevention, virtual counselling, and culturally relevant digital awareness content; school-based education and family engagement; outreach in public spaces and community events; and development of South Asian-responsive residential treatment and strengthened withdrawal management services.

Feedback Received



GROUP 3- MENTAL HEALTH

Group 3 focused on the mental health-related challenges currently experienced by South Asians in the GTA. Following is a non-exhaustive list (not in any specific order) of the needs and issues identified by the group participants:

- Community members face social stigma, shame, denial, isolation, peer pressure, and lack of family support. Limited awareness of mental health and substance use issues, cultural misconceptions, and fear of judgment reduce willingness to seek help and engage with services.
- Challenges include limited English proficiency, lack of culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate services, low awareness of available programs, financial constraints, transportation difficulties, housing issues, and environmental barriers such as harsh weather. These factors collectively hinder access to health, social, and mental health services.
- PCHS can provide culturally sensitive counselling, peer support, family-inclusive programs, wellness workshops, mental health pop-up events, and pre-arrival and settlement supports. Initiatives such as employment resources, financial assistance, transportation support, volunteer and mentorship programs strengthen integration and community engagement.
- The organization can increase community visibility through outreach in schools, community centres, places of worship, and ethnic media. Encouraging feedback from service users, normalizing mental health experiences, training staff and volunteers, and fostering newcomer participation in mentorship and volunteer roles helps build trust, engagement, and culturally responsive service delivery.
- A dedicated PCHS app and website tools can centralize program schedules, multilingual resources, mental health content, and emergency contacts. Features like self-assessment tools, FAQs in multiple languages, and online workshops improve access and empower clients to identify and address needs proactively.
- Using social media, ethnic media, QR codes, and app notifications can increase awareness of services, normalize discussions on mental health and substance use, and promote wellness activities. Youth-focused digital campaigns and engagement opportunities foster early prevention, peer support, and ongoing connection with the community.

Feedback Received



GROUP 4- MARGINALIZED NEWCOMER POPULATION

Group 4 focused on the challenges currently experienced by the marginalized population in the GTA. Following is a non-exhaustive list (not in any specific order) of the needs and issues identified by the group participants.

- Newcomers often face significant challenges in navigating health and social services due to limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with systems, and a lack of culturally tailored resources. This includes difficulty understanding instructions, completing forms, accessing accurate information, and finding services that meet cultural and dietary needs. Limited awareness of available programs, coupled with insufficient guidance, reduces engagement and trust in the service system.
- Financial constraints, unemployment or underemployment, lack of affordable housing, limited personal transportation, and difficulties with public transit restrict access to essential services. Additionally, newcomers experience social isolation, peer or cultural pressures, mental health stress, and challenges adapting to harsh weather, all of which impact emotional well-being and the ability to seek support. Limited social networks, food insecurity, and lack of culturally responsive support exacerbate these barriers.
- PCHS can enhance pre-arrival and settlement supports through online orientations, informational webinars, and resource packages on health, social services, housing, employment, and community integration. Direct assistance, such as transportation support, expanded employment resources, financial assistance programs, and increased organizational capacity, will help reduce waitlists and improve access.
- PCHS can promote newcomer involvement through volunteering and mentorship programs. Encouraging newcomers who have successfully integrated to support others via peer navigation or mentorship strengthens social connections, builds Canadian experience, and fosters community bonds.
- Creating a dedicated PCHS to consolidate resources, program schedules, contact information, translation tools, mental health supports, and emergency connections.
- PCHS can use diverse outreach channels, including social media, ethnic media, television, community centres, places of worship, and public spaces. Strategically collaborating with libraries, community centres, and clinics can directly connect newcomers to increasing awareness and accessibility.

Key Recommendations & Alignment with Strategic Plan 2023-2027



The recommendations received from each of the four groups are broadly classified into four categories. The following section entails the alignment of these four recommended categories with the strategic priorities of Punjabi Community Health Services for 2023-2027.

GROUP 1- SENIORS

Key Recommendations	Alignment with Strategic Pillar	Alignment with Strategic Objectives	What PCHS Can Do
Year-round activities, cultural programs, health education, mental health sessions, and organizing trips	Pillar 1: Sustain	Strengthen existing programs and partnerships	Dedicated indoor spaces so there is no gap in the sessions; weekly health classes; culturally inclusive programming
Digital literacy /technology advancement courses or sessions	Pillar 1: Sustain	Strengthen service delivery through virtual platforms	Short-term digital skills training/sessions; multilingual guides/program flyers/ survey feedback forms etc
Engagement with community leaders, consultates to promote the services and support for the seniors.	Pillar 3: Grow	Emerging Community Needs	Increased presence in the community to be an advocate for the community.

Key Recommendations & Alignment with Strategic Plan 2023-2027



GROUP 2- ADDICTIONS

Key Recommendations	Alignment with Strategic Pillar	Alignment with Strategic Objectives	What PCHS Can Do
Culturally sensitive counselling, family-inclusive programs, sessions on time management, and essential life skills.	Pillar 2: Grow	Emerging Community Needs	Conducting sessions and family engagement
Stronger promotion via multilingual website/social media platforms	Pillar 3: Expand	Recognizable Brand	Translation of resources and culturally relevant multi-lingual awareness
Explore options for Mobile app or QR code for easy access; virtual counselling.	Pillar 3: Expand	Research and Innovation	Development of digital app or tools; virtual counselling and sessions.

Key Recommendations & Alignment with Strategic Plan 2023-2027



GROUP 3- MENTAL HEALTH

Key Recommendations	Alignment with Strategic Pillar	Alignment with Strategic Objectives	What PCHS Can Do
Culturally sensitive counselling, peer support, wellness workshops	Pillar 1: Sustain	Strengthen existing programs and partnerships	Mental health pop-ups; family-inclusive programs
Outreach in schools, places of worship, ethnic media	Pillar 2: Grow	Emerging Community Needs	Community events; ethnic media campaigns and conducting
Digital app with mental health content & multilingual resources	Pillar 3: Expand	Research and Innovation	Survey links in multiple language; Conducting online workshops.
Staffs' and volunteers' training on culturally responsive service delivery which helps to build trust.	Pillar 3: Expand	Commitment to IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility)	Culturally responsive services and on-going training for staff and volunteers.



GROUP 4- MARGINALIZED NEWCOMER POPULATION

Key Recommendations	Alignment with Strategic Pillar	Alignment with Strategic	What PCHS Can Do
Multilingual and culturally tailored resources for the newcomers, Support in developing English proficiency, information about the system (Transportation, Public Transit etc). Employment, community integration, financial assistance or support for the clients.	Pillar 1: Sustain	Strengthen existing programs and partnerships	Culturally responsive information sessions. Translation of Brochures /feedback SurveyMonkey links into culturally appropriate languages.
Promoting Volunteer & mentorship programs to support the newcomers.	Pillar 2: Grow	Trusted and Valued Partner	Building mentorship/volunteers networks
Outreaches through social media, ethnic media, community centres, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, as applicable.	Pillar 3: Expand	Recognizable Brand	Making outreach activities at Libraries, places of worship, community centers etc to promote the programs.

Next Steps



Building on the key recommendations and aligning it with the strategic priorities for 2023–2027, PCHS will develop a work plan to address the issues identified by participants at the Friends of PCHS event. It is recommended that this work plan be incorporated into the organization’s implementation framework for its four-year strategic plan. The outcomes of this report will be shared with the broader community at PCHS’s AGM and/or at Friends of PCHS events in 2026.

Glossary



- **Addiction:** Addiction refers to the problematic use of a substance such as alcohol, drugs etc. The harms of substance use can range from mild (e.g., feeling hungover, being late for work) to severe (e.g., homelessness, disease).
- **Culturally Responsive Services:** Cultural responsiveness refers to services that are respectful of and relevant to the beliefs, practices, culture and linguistic needs of diverse client populations and communities. Cultural responsiveness includes the capacity to respond to the issues of diverse communities, it requires the knowledge and capacity at varying levels of intervention: systemic, organizational, professional, and individual.
- **Community Integration:** - Community integration is the process by which individuals or previously marginalized groups become active and accepted participants in the broader society or community. This process requires mutual adaptation from both the individual or group and the receiving community itself. The outcome involves achieving full participation in social, economic, cultural, and political life based on equity and dignity for all people.
- **Ethnic Media:** Ethnic media complements the role of mainstream media by fostering greater community engagement and political involvement among ethnic minorities, who might otherwise feel marginalized in mainstream media discourse. This kind of media needs to be viewed as an opportunity to enhance democracy rather than a threat to it, since the public sphere will become more multilayered. They play a crucial role in shaping democracy by providing platforms for underrepresented groups to voice their perspectives, concerns and cultural narratives.
- **GTA:** It is an acronym used for Greater Toronto Area, which includes the City of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Peel, Halton, Durham, and York.
- **Marginalization:** Marginalization is the process by which individuals and groups are prevented from fully participating in society. Marginalized populations can experience barriers to accessing meaningful employment, adequate housing, education, recreation, clean water, health services and other social determinants of health.
- **Mental Health:** Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well, and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

Glossary



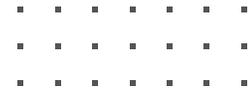
- **Peel:** Peel is a regional municipality in Ontario which comprises of the cities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon.
- **Racialized Communities:** The term racialized is used to refer to a wide variety of people or communities of different racial and ethnic backgrounds who were historically referred to as visible minorities. Racialization is a complex interweaving of social, cultural, and legal processes through which particular groups – primarily those who are non-Caucasian/non-white – are defined and disadvantaged.
- **Remote/Online Services:** Any service that is not being offered in-person.
- **Seniors:** In this report, seniors refer to individuals 55 years of age and older.
- **Social Isolation:** A situation where a person has a low quantity and quality of contact with other people. This may include few contacts, roles, and the absence of rewarding relationships. This may cause adverse impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Stigma:** The negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency. A stigma implies social disapproval and can lead unfairly to discrimination against and exclusion of the individual
- **System:** A system is a way of thinking about and making sense of the world. Systems have various parts, including norms and attitudes; authority, voices at the table, and decision-making power; networks; resources; and policies and practices.

References (for glossary of terms used)



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List of Appendices



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