



MA'AN

Wraparound
Service
Response



Final Report

March 2021 - April 2022



POLYCULTURAL
IMMIGRANT & COMMUNITY SERVICES





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About Peel CAS

Peel Children's Aid Society strives to ensure the safety and well-being of the community's most vulnerable with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. Through culturally competent services, with the support of our Peel community, we help parents and caregivers build healthy families and provide a safe environment for children and youth.

We believe that children and youth belong at home with their families whenever possible, and will do everything we can to keep families together. Families we work with may be facing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, ill health, domestic violence, mental health issues, or caring for a child who has serious physical, emotional or developmental difficulties. Some families just need parenting support. Peel CAS works with the family to determine the kind of supports they need, and links them with the appropriate community services.

Together, Peel CAS and our partners work with children and families for a stronger, healthier community.

About Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services

Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services offers a broad range of inclusive, community-led support programs for people of all ages and nationalities. We have been working for over 45 years to promote a healthy, vibrant GTA and Region of Peel by offering services tailored to seniors, youth, women, children, families and newcomers to Canada. Polycultural provides accessible programming through partnering with community agencies at no cost, and takes pride in offering individualized support that allows each client an equal opportunity to reach their full potential. Lastly, Polycultural is committed to serve all individuals and communities to have an equal opportunity to be productive members of the Canadian society.



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Peel CAS Culturally Competent Services

Peel is one of the most culturally diverse regions in the country, and Peel CAS is committed to responding to the unique needs of families in our region. We have developed a series of culturally competent service models, in partnership with local community organizations, to ensure that children, youth and families receive service that is anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and respectful of their culture.

These services recognize the systemic barriers and oppression racialized youth and families experience and help to address them through cultural sensitivity and enhanced community partnerships.

About Ma'an

Ma'an is a partnership between Peel CAS and Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services (PICS) to serve the Arab communities in Peel. Ma'an launched in April 2021 with the goal of providing culturally appropriate services to Arab children, youth and families.

This demographic represents one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, and in Peel. Four Arabic-language countries are in the top 10 countries of birth for recent immigrants in our region. It is important for our services to address the unique needs of this growing community. The Ma'an project will help us better serve Arab communities and help ensure that children and youth of those communities are able to remain with their families as much as possible.

The Ma'an project team consulted with focus groups, community agencies, and community members, as well as staff from Peel CAS and PICS, to ask how we could best support Arab communities. This feedback was incorporated into the Ma'an service model, to provide culturally competent services and support to our Arab families, children and youth, with improved access to employment, housing, education, parenting, and mental health services.

The word "Ma'an" means "together" in Arabic, which emphasizes the collaborative nature of our work with our partners and the families we support. Programs like Ma'an are at the heart of Peel CAS' overall goal to keep children at home with their families whenever possible and strengthen connections with community.



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How does it work?

Families from Arab communities are eligible to participate in the Ma'an Wraparound program. Participating families are paired with a Cultural Resource Worker who collaborates with the family, Peel CAS, and other community agencies, to foster an environment of understanding. This worker integrates case management, community engagement, system navigation, and advocacy, through a lens of diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-racism practices.

Through Ma'an, families receive culturally sensitive support and resources to meet the unique needs of the clients. Ma'an allows families to receive services that are better suited to their particular situation, from providers who understand Arab culture.

The Ma'an Project and our other wraparound service models are important components of the agency's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy. By working in partnership with our region's diverse communities, we can strengthen relationships, raise awareness, and dispel myths related to child welfare, while providing better service to the children, youth and families we work with.

Ma'an Goal

- Assist Peel CAS to provide culturally competent services to Arabic families
- Ensure that children and youth of Arabic background remain at home with their families whenever possible
- Strengthen relationships with Arab communities to dispel child welfare myths through information sharing and partnership building
- Educate and raise awareness about topics related to child welfare
- Create opportunities for ongoing supportive services between Arab communities and Peel CAS
- The collaboration would have a consultation component and training

Ma'an Services

Ma'an offers a range of culturally centered services, including:

- Joint visits with Peel CAS worker and Ma'an Cultural Resource Worker to provide culturally sensitive services and support
- Creating a safety plan together with the family that ensures the safety of the child and youth
- Connecting parents to Arabic parenting support and social network
- Providing access to settlement services, employment, housing, education and childcare services



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- Referrals to counselling and mental health services through community partnerships
- Support with navigating the system including, social services, child welfare, health, legal etc.,

Ma'an Services in numbers:

As shown in Figure 1, Ma'an has exceeded expectations in meeting the planned target for February 2021. Ma'an has received **52 referrals** between April 2021 and March 2022. Over 60% of the referrals took place during the first quarter of 2021-2022. In order to increase awareness of the initiative and its services, effective outreach and promotion activities have been conducted internally and externally to increase referrals.

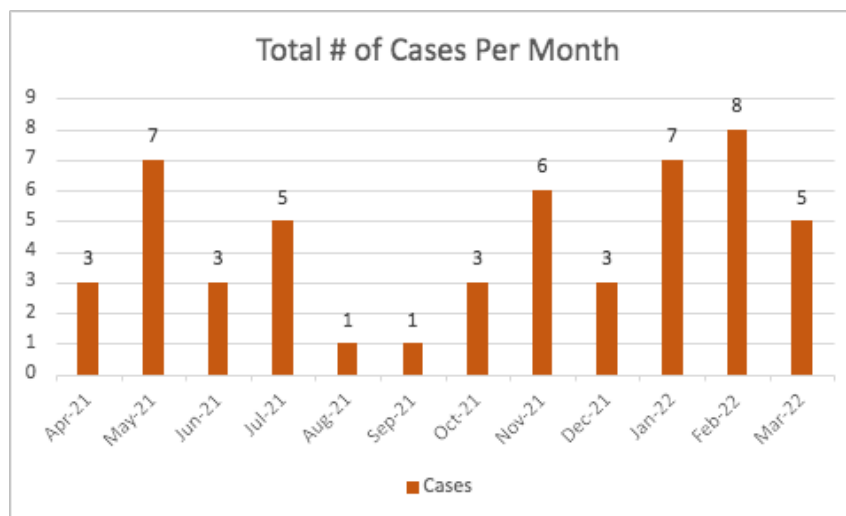


Figure 1. Number of Cases received by Ma'an from Apr 2021- Mar 2022

Since Ma'an began receiving referrals in April 2021, a total of **189 clients** comprised of 71 caregivers and 118 children and youth, have been served by the initiative. Almost 800 hours of services have been provided to Ma'an families. Ma'an provided services that focused on assessing the families' needs, understanding their challenges, creating short and long term plans, follow-ups, and connecting them, through a cultural lens, to available services and programs in the community. As of March 2022, 31 cases with Ma'an have been closed, as the planned intervention and goal set were met.



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Ma'an Service Highlights from March 2021-April 2022



Summary of Ma'an Cases

Month	No. of cases	No. of Clients	Hours of service
Apr-21	3	10	77
May-21	7	31	163
Jun-21	3	6	34
Jul-21	5	21	140
Aug-21	1	3	24
Sep-21	1	4	23
Oct-21	3	11	65
Nov-21	6	24	72
Dec-21	3	15	34
Jan-22	7	28	71
Feb-22	8	32	70
Mar-22	5	4	24
Total	52	189	797



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Top referrals

The referrals under Ma'an are based on the unique nature of the clients' needs. In the first year of the Ma'an initiative, referrals for parenting support services, settlement services, and mental health support account for about half of the clients' services.

The top referrals that have been processed are, but not limited to:

- **Parenting support**
Free Arabic Parenting programs/Parent Counsellors/ Parents & caregivers' workshops and webinars
- **Settlement services:**
Settlement Counsellors for affordable Housing/ Financial aid services/ Job opportunities in the community.
- **Mental health support:**
Crises Counselling / Mental Health Counselling & Therapy/ Parenting Coaching
- **Youth Programs:**
Programs for children and youth for activities and job search.
- **Legal services:**
Legal aid services
- **Faith communities:**
Islamic Foundations/ Religious base counselling/ Church community services.
- **Culturally appropriate Social Networks:**
Arabic women social groups/ Arabic newcomers support groups.

What is working well?

- The goal of Ma'an wraparound has been met in supporting Arab communities' families to better understand Peel CAS's role, helping them in identifying and accessing additional services in the community, and in providing culturally competent support to the families that we worked with.
- Successfully designed and delivered an **Arabic parenting program** (Together for Positive Parenting) with the goal of supporting Arab families by raising awareness and increasing knowledge about all



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issues related to family relations and educational challenges facing parents based on the cultural differences experienced by Arab immigrants. (Please see Appendix 1)

- Engaging clients in positive and productive conversations in order to establish a sustainable rapport. In some cases, the cultural facilitator was also able to connect with the children and youth by working with them directly and ensuring that their voices are heard.
- Utilizing the internal programs at Polycultural to build a holistic approach to serving the family.
- Ma'an promotional and outreach materials were developed in Arabic and English languages and shared with stakeholders and community partners agencies both internally and externally.
- Collaboration with faith leaders to provide Ma'an families with social and emotional support.
- Holistic approach to the client's needs, working in collaboration with other community services and organizations to provide the clients with the adequate support and to ensure that their needs are met.

Client's Testimonies

Nearly 90% of the Ma'an families expressed their appreciation for the support of Ma'an. The following are some translated testimonies from Ma'an clients:

- ◆ "I'm very appreciative of this service. It feels like a family here."
- ◆ "Thank you for helping me to understand the role of Peel CAS. Now, I feel comfortable working with Peel CAS workers."
- ◆ "I'm very thankful to have the support from someone who understands my culture and speaks my language".
- ◆ "Ma'an worker was the bridge between the Peel CAS worker and me and played a big role in explaining my culture to Peel CAS worker, which helped us work cooperatively together."
- ◆ "I'm so thankful for your help and support. I feel so comfortable sharing my story with you".
- ◆ "It is beneficial that I'm working with someone from my culture who speaks my language, knows my values and beliefs and can be an intermediate between Peel CAS worker and my family".



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Peel CAS staff feedback

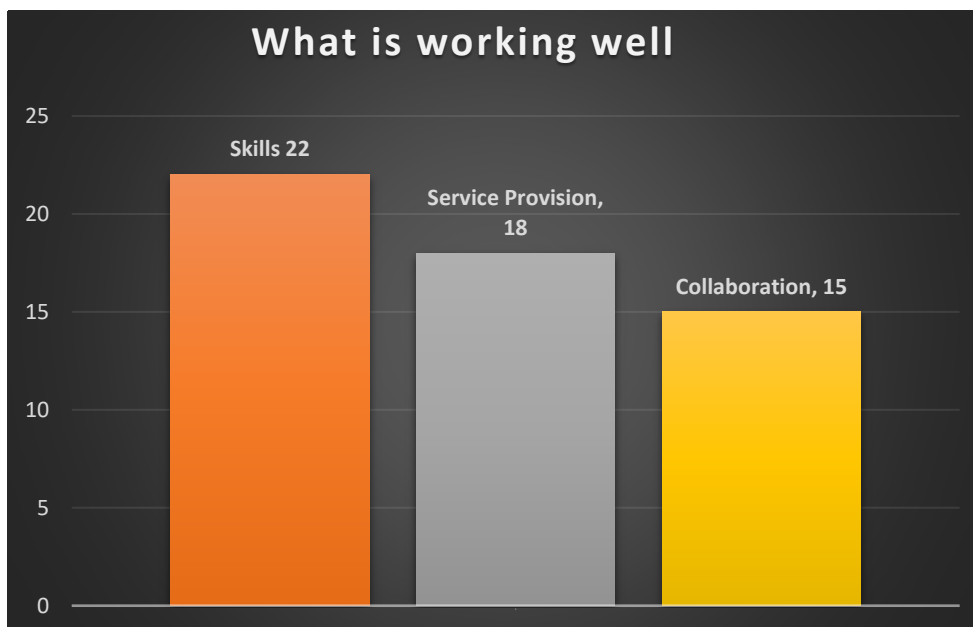
We surveyed Peel CAS frontline workers to collect feedback on Ma'an Wraparound, and the responses were as follows:

1. What is working well with our Ma'an Wraparound?

Cultural Navigator:

- Excellent skills, positive, helpful, skilled in building relationships with families.
- **Service provision:** prompt to respond, provides helpful and timely updates to workers, provides timely check-ins with families, connects family to helpful resources/services.
- **Collaboration** with CAS workers: easy to work with, understands agency values, explains CAS role in cultural context, helps CAS workers to understand cultural aspects of families, finds creative ways for collaboration.

“The program is flexible and is good to consult with. In one case, the program was available to provide guidance to the assigned worker in another region. CWICE was also involved to support this case. We appreciated the creative ways to work with families across jurisdictional boundaries.”





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Peel CAS Ma'an Project Lead

- She is always available and approachable! The project lead is a great internal support, and she is very helpful with resources.
- The lead provides great case consultations, clear explanation what this program can or cannot help with.

"Zeina as an internal support/consultation has been wonderful. She helps with consultations and joint calls/meetings with families to explain Ma'an or offer support to families who may have declined services."

2. What are the areas for improvement?

- Advertise this program more, presentations to teams would be helpful.
- There have been a few limitations with referrals to other programs, impacting the families at the time due to cost.
- Many of the cases referred to Ma'an are custody and access, hopefully there will be more resources provided around this need.
- Families requesting Arab speaking workers, it would be helpful to recruit Arab speaking workers.
- When the Ma'an worker is referring family to another Arabic organization (community partners), to explain to Peel CAS worker how this organization is going to help and why we are referring our client.

3. Are you clear about the referral process for Ma'an?

- Referral process is clear.
- Sometimes the families deny the Ma'an initiative not because of the program but because of CAS – better outreach would be great and the brochure would be helpful in providing clarification.

Some areas of challenges

- Due to cultural difference which manifest themselves in behaviours, beliefs, parenting, and disciplinary practices, cultural conflict arises between workers and Arab families. This conflict occurs when the family's expectations of the child welfare system in Canada are not met based on their perspectives. The cultural facilitator continues to act as a liaison between Peel CAS workers and the families and works supportively with them, helping them to understand the child welfare system in Canada as well as working with Peel CAS workers to understand the cultural issues that led Peel CAS to become involved with the family.



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- As privacy is a highly valued value in Arab culture, Arab families do not discuss personal matters outside of their families. This leads to the resistance of family to allow the workers to build their support network as they don't want to share their issues with people from outside of their family. The cultural facilitator continues to play an important role in explaining to the family the importance of having a support network as part of the safely planning.
- Most of the Ma'an families have limited English proficiency, which limits their access to the funded services, since those services are not available in Arabic. Examples: Legal Aid, counselling, parenting programs, etc.
- The lack of culturally competent community services to meet the unique needs of the Arab families, such as: mental health counselling, parenting coaching and support, crisis counselling, and co-parenting counselling. The cultural facilitator continues to reach out to community agencies and service providers to explore if there are any of the above-mentioned services available for Ma'an families.
- Many of the families that we are working with experience financial hardship, so even when we find culturally competent services that meet their needs, most of those services are fee-based, and our clients cannot afford to pay for the services. Those services are essential to ensure that the family is able to achieve the safety plan and the outcome goals set by Peel CAS and by the Ma'an facilitator.

Recommendation

- Continuous communication (different platforms, structure,) among Peel CAS workers and the cultural facilitator to effectively share and exchange updates and information on a regular basis about cases and Ma'an service delivery.
- Assign trained volunteers from the Arab community to assist Ma'an families with their needs, such as interpreting, transportation, and online applications, etc. (This can save time and result in more appropriate cultural response, social support, networking and connection.)
- Enhance capacity building, professional development, awareness sessions/materials related to the Ma'an families (Arab communities) to bridge any cultural gaps/differences.
- Recruitment of Arabic-speaking frontline workers.



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Conclusion

The Ma'an program has had a successful first year of operation, providing culturally competent support to Peel's Arab communities. The service has been well-received by clients and effective at connecting them to appropriate community supports. Efforts will be made to continue to expand and enhance the services and resources available through Ma'an, in order to provide the best support possible to children, youth and families from Arab communities.



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Appendix 1

Together for Positive Parenting

Polycultural is leading a Parenting program that consists of 5 weekly workshops with different topics planned:

- Positive Parenting with cultural barriers
- Mindfulness
- About us -Peel CAS Presentation
- Emotional Management for healthier parenting
- Relationships conflicts-Domestic Violence awareness

NOV
3, 10, 17, 24
DEC
1
6:30 PM - 8 PM

For more information on how to join, please contact:

- 📞 647-551-6200
- ✉️ lfarah@polycultural.org
- 📍 Virtual Zoom Meeting

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