

Recommendation Letter

This letter is written to support Barka Social Integration Society.

I am a Consulting Psychiatrist practicing with the Fraser Health Authority at 350 Lougheed Highway in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. My principal patient population are immigrants and people with addiction.

I have had the opportunity to practice psychiatry in three cultures: Eastern European, African and North American, and have come to appreciate the significant psychosocial impact of immigration stress on immigrants.

I have volunteered for Barka's Advisory Committee since 2015. Barka provides support for persons who are mostly immigrants experiencing difficulties in overcoming immigration stress.

Many of them struggle with addiction issues, mental illness, legal conflicts and family problems. There is a high suicide rate in immigrant population. Because of the language barrier they experience considerable difficulty in accessing existing services for help. Also, immigrants often cannot benefit from existing support groups for addiction as AA/NA because of their insufficient English language skills.

I have been privileged to learn about Barka's activity from those who are my patients. For example, they attend regular AA in Polish, individual counselling and family help groups.

Barka was first begun in Poland, and has been adopted by other European countries such as the United Kingdom or the Netherlands. Based on family principles such as sharing life, supporting each other and maintaining contribution by working, Barka's community goals are to achieve and maintain sobriety and a drug-free approach for their clients.

This approach is quite different from what seems to be the prevailing approach today, of an existing addiction services practicing a "harm reduction" approach which allows ongoing substance use for persons with addiction.

In the era of a growing global issue of addiction and recent epidemics of overdoses and death on narcotics of 12,000 in BC, Barka Society offers a unique way of treatment for those who would have an opportunity to participate in their programs.

For Barka's ongoing functioning this volunteer base organization should receive support from provincial or/and national organizations holding resources which potentially would help in expanding their services to larger population.

Thank you,
Dr. Maria Daszkiewicz
October 4, 2018