Family Engagement with Refugee Populations

Laura Gardner, MSW
Consultant for Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services
laura@immigrantsrefugeesandschools.org
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BRYCS aims to...

1. Increase knowledge
2. Raise level of practice & capacity to serve
3. Enhance information sharing, collaboration & coordination

BRYCS highlights...

- Largest online, searchable collection of resources (7k+)
  www.brycs.org; surpassing 1 million downloads annually
- More than 100 self-authored resources, including toolkits, webinars, & online modules <parenting handbooks>
- Promising Practices database
- Refugee Portal
Who are Refugees?

A refugee is someone who “...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country.” UNRC (U.N Geneva convention, 1951)
Difference Between Immigrants & Refugees

An immigrant *voluntarily* leaves his/her country of origin to work, study, or live in the U.S.

A refugee is *forced* to flee due to persecution.

An asylee is forced to flee, but doesn’t ask for protection until already in the U.S.
Durable Solutions

1. Repatriation
2. Local Integration
3. Resettlement
How Refugees Come to the U.S.

Step 1
Refugees flee their homeland, usually to a neighboring country
How Refugees Come to the U.S.

Step 2

Refugees register with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the U.S. Embassy.
Step 3

Refugees are processed by the Resettlement Service Centers and referred to DHS for security clearances. Comprehensive health screenings are conducted.
How Refugees Come to the U.S.

Step 4
Once approved, cultural orientation is conducted and allocation to national voluntary agencies occurs.

Refugees arrive in the U.S. and are greeted by local resettlement agency staff at the airport.
Voluntary Agencies ("volags")

The U.S. government contracts with 9 large organizations that partner with local nonprofits to assist refugees.

1. Church World Service
2. Episcopal Migration Ministries
3. Ethiopian Community Development Council
4. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
5. International Rescue Committee
6. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
7. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
8. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
9. World Relief

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If a refugee has relatives in the U.S., he or she is likely to be resettled near or with them. Otherwise, the resettlement agency decides on the best match between a community’s resources and the refugee’s needs.

The 9 agencies send representatives to a weekly “Allocations” meeting, where new cases are reviewed and assigned.
• decent, safe housing
• furniture, household items
• food
• clothing
• pocket money
• transportation
• health services
• community orientation
• help apply for benefits
• Social Security card
• assist to enroll in:
  • school
  • ESL
  • employment program

resettlement
How many refugees will the U.S. resettle in FY18?

Each year the president sets the number of refugees to be admitted. In FY2018, that number is 45,000 – a historic low – and it’s unlikely we will get to that number.
Refugees Admitted to the U.S.
### Top 10 States Refugees Resettled in
(10/1/06 - 6/25/18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Refugee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>28,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>20,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>14,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>8,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>7,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>4,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>4,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>4,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>4,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>3,216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Top 10 Countries of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>6,886</td>
<td>2,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>6,557</td>
<td>2,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>6,130</td>
<td>1,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>5,078</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>4,264</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>3,550</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2,577</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>1,917</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top Languages (2008-2018)

- Arabic (31%)
- Nepali (21%)
- Somali (13%)
- Sgaw Karen (10%)
- Spanish (7%)
- Kiswahili (5%)
- Chaldean (4%)
- Burmese (4%)
- Armenian (3%)
- Farsi (3%)
Differences between refugees and other English Learners or immigrants in schools?

- Likely more with interrupted formal education
- Less familiar with “western” culture and standard of living
- Less familiar with American culture and English
- Many born in refugee camps and don’t know their country of origin
- Split second decision to leave country, but long time waiting to come to the U.S.
Refugee School Impact Grant

- Funding comes from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Social services set aside
- Goals of the program: to strengthen academic performance and facilitate social adjustment of school-age refugees
- Refugee youth in first year are priority, but up to 5 years
- Refugees ages 5-18
Allowable Activities

- Specialized approaches such as cultural orientation, refugee parent/teacher meetings, etc.
- Programming that supports the integration of ORR-served youth into school systems, such as ESL classes
- Facilitating social integration activities
- Developing partnerships
- Offering services at a variety of times
- Measuring academic performance
Family Engagement Model #1: Home/School Liaisons

- Purpose – bridge the cultural/linguistic gap between home and school
- Usually former refugees; sometimes called “cultural brokers”
- Purposes vary – Academics? Family issues? Case management? Interpretation?
- Could be hired by the refugee resettlement agency or the school district. Could be based out of either.

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Family Engagement Model #2: Workshops

- Usually focused on orienting parents to the schools and how to become involved in their children’s education, but may include other topics
- Who to partner with?
- Where will you have them? Time of day?
- Large group or small groups by language?
- How often?
- Provide child care, transportation, and food if possible
Family Engagement Model #3: English Classes for Parents

- Parents’ confidence in their own intellectual abilities affects their involvement in their children’s education
- Parent as first teacher
- Can incorporate cultural orientation and info on how to help children in school
- Can incorporate computer literacy
Family Engagement Model #4: Refugee/Immigrant Family Field Trips

- Purpose is to educate the whole family about history and culture (link to curriculum)
- Typically held during the weekend so parents can attend
- Staff supported but parents are responsible for their children
- Family strengthening
Family Engagement Model #5: Family Literacy Programs

- Activities that involve parents and children engaged in reading and/or writing together
- Role of language and literacy in changing intergenerational relationships
- Reduce acculturation/language gap
Family Engagement Model #6: Community Schools

- Both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and community resources
- Integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development
- Stronger families and healthier communities = improved student learning
- Schools are the center of the community and open to everyone

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Family Engagement Model #7: Parent Panels

- Purpose is for parents to share information about their background and culture
- An opportunity for them to be the teacher/expert
Word of Caution: International Nights & Multicultural Fairs
How to Encourage Attendance of Refugee Parents at School Events

• Spend time first building relationships and trust
• Involve resettlement agencies, ethnic community based organizations, and refugee community leaders
• Have the parents choose the topics to be discussed
• Utilize home/school liaisons
• Provide interpretation/translation (for outreach, too!)
• Provide transportation and child care
• Consider occasional events specifically for ELL/refugee parents

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Democratic Republic of Congo
Info for Educators on Congolese

- In refugee camps there is free primary education, but lack of previous education is #1 issue for U.S. schools
- Many 18+ with some formal schooling cannot read/write
- Top languages: Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, & Kinyamulenge
- Major parenting differences with discipline & supervision
- Need orientation to U.S. schools
Bhutan
Info for Educators on Bhutanese

- Bhutanese – Free education through 9th grade in the refugee camps in Nepal. Used Nepal’s curriculum.

- Bhutanese Refugees (includes virtual tour of the refugee camp and a section on education)
  
  [http://bhutaneserefugees.com](http://bhutaneserefugees.com)
syria
Info for Educators on Syrians

- Before the conflict, free public education for all
- Most Syrians have attended at least primary school and have basic literacy skills in Arabic
- Before the conflict, the adult basic literacy rate was 90% for men & 77% for women
- Syrians parent their children closely, helping children with schoolwork and monitoring all activities as best they can
Refugees are not legally permitted to attend public school in Malaysia but the “Chin Student Organization” fills the gap.

Most camps on Thai/Burma border have primary school and some have middle schools.

“Refugees from Burma in the United States” on Youtube

Info for Educators on Burma
Info for Educators on Iraq

• One of the best educational systems in the Middle East before Gulf War. High rates of literacy.
• Before war, higher education was free, & many people highly educated
• Many schools damaged by bombing
• Education in countries of first asylum (Jordan, Lebanon, etc.) varies
somalia
Info for Educators on Somalia

• Rich oral tradition
• Somali language did not have written form until 1972
• Due to civil war (since 1991) and limited education in refugee camps, this group comes with limited formal education
Contact Us

www.brycs.org
info@brycs.org
1-888-572-6500