Refugee K-12 Education

World Refugee Day 2011
Denver, Colorado

Erin Kimmel, Lutheran Family Services-Refugee School Programs
Lisa Bright, Colorado African Organization-Refugee Parent Engagement
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Shafiqa Mobarez, African Community Center-Refugee School Enrollment

Refugee School Enrollment Process

- Usually done by case managers or volunteers through sponsoring refugee resettlement agency (VOLAGS)
- Core Service: Enrollment required within 30 days of child's arrival in the US
- Help with required immunizations, enrollment paperwork, locating a school, etc.

Newcomer Programs for Refugee Students

- DPS - Denver Public Schools have magnet schools to which all newcomer refugee students should be enrolled in due to the greater services they provide to refugee students (i.e. ELA classes). These schools are: Place Bridge Academy (for elementary school students), Merrill Middle School, and South High School.

- Some VOLAGS provide the family with an appointment to get school clothes (Clothes to Kids etc.)
- Provide the family with school supplies (if available - if not speak to the school about what supplies that they might have for the student(s))

Ask schools about transportation, provide the family with transportation information (either provided through the school or with walking directions to and from the school - physically show them this route to make sure they understand).

- DPS: Merrill and Place provide school buses for students who don't live within walking distance and who don't live outside of their school zones. South provides newcomer students with RTD bus passes if they don't live too close to the school).

Lutheran Family Services – School Programs

- Denver Public, Aurora Public, District 11 (Colorado Springs), Weld County (Evans/ Greeley), Morgan County (Ft Morgan)

Challenges for the student

- Language barriers
  - Social, academic, non-standard variants
- Cultural differences
  - Behavior, routine, student-directed vs teacher directed
- Limited or interrupted formal education
- Lack of background knowledge

Challenges from the school's perspective

- Some lack school-readiness skills
- High numbers not performing at grade level impacts school performance on standardized testing
- Need to cater for heterogeneous, mixed-language groups
- Behavior issues
- Dietary needs

School Programs Support

Focus on:

- Academic Support
  - Build and strengthen foundational skills including English language and literacy development and work on basic number sense as well as addition, subtraction, multiplication
- Cultural Orientation for Students
  - School behavior
  - Study skills
  - Library use
  - Involvement in clubs and activities
- Extended programming for language and skills maintenance and cultural exchange
  - Summer Language Camp
  - International Club

LFS Contact Information

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International Kid Success:
School-Based Counseling Program

Jewish Family Service

Improving lives. Rebuilding hope.

Presented by: Ralitsa Ranova, LCSW, Ph.D., School-Based Therapist, International Kid Success Program, Jewish Family Service of Colorado;
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SUCCESS SERVICES

INTERNATIONAL KID SCHOOL-BASED

1. IKS Services for Refugee Students

- **Individual Counseling**

  Referrals for students needing individual counseling originate from teachers, school social workers and administrative staff. Students are followed as long as needed throughout an academic year.

- **Group Interventions:**

  Cultural Adjustment and Newcomer Groups, I Helpers and Leadership Program.

2. IKS Services for School Staff

- **Consultation**
  IKS staff is available for consultation by phone or in-person regarding specific individual student situation (most often the case) or to address a larger problem/issue that school staff is struggling with.

- **Training**
  Focus of training is typically on enhancing school staff understanding of psychological, cultural, and practical issues affecting immigrant and refugee students and their families and increasing awareness of how these issues can impede a child's ability to succeed in school.

Coping with Acculturation and Trauma

- **Acculturation:** How to integrate? - this is the question.
- **Acculturation gap:** Different levels of acculturation among family members; Refugee youth serve as primary interpreters for family; Pressure to keep up with traditions and fit in at school; Role reversal, ambiguity of family roles.

  *****Refugee children and youth learn English more quickly as compared to parents and may appear to be acculturated when in fact they misunderstand many things about the U.S. culture.**

- **Traumatic experiences:** Affect refugee students emotional state; Undermine their ability to trust authority figures such as teachers and to interact with peers; Have an effect on academic performance by interfering with a student's ability to concentrate or retain new information; Impact ability to plan productively for their own futures;

IKS Cultural Adjustment Groups Video

Refugee and Immigrant students from South High School share their experiences and thoughts about the IKS cultural adjustment groups, school in America, as well as their dreams for the future.

Jewish Family Service Can Help

- **Consultations and training sessions for school staff on social, emotional and mental health needs of refugees are available.**

- **Contact Information:**

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- **To learn about other JFS programs, such as *Refugee Mental Health Program* and *Russian Mental Health Program,* please call 303.597.7777 or visit www.jewishfamilyservice.org**

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Refugee Family-School Partnerships

Colorado African Organization

Model of Refugee Parent Engagement

- Community members are trained as leaders and educators in parent involvement through a train-the-trainer model
- Community members ("Refugee Community Navigators") become empowered to provide information to fellow community members, who then pass down this newly acquired knowledge to future refugee parents arriving in the country
- Refugee Community Navigators teach about differences in educational systems (homeland/US), provide information on local school policies, procedures, school-based programming, resources across schools and community to support refugee youth education, parent rights, roles, and responsibilities, and provide suggestions on ways that newcomer parents can become partners in their child's education in America
- Refugee Community Navigators encourage and mobilize other parents in their communities to become more involved

Refugee Community Navigator Model for Parent Engagement…

- Builds on community strengths and norms i.e. community support systems
- Community based-delivers parent engagement information through culturally appropriate mediums i.e. natural gathering places
- Parent workshops in community provide opportunity for parents to discuss challenges and share experiences and resources working with schools
- 2 way learning: Refugee Parents-Schools Schools-Refugee Parents
- Refugee community leadership

Refugee Community Navigators As…..

- Language support
- Links/Bridges
- Educators
- Leaders
- Cultural Brokers
- Mediators
- Advocates

Refugee Community Navigators

- Strengthen relationships between teachers and refugee parents
- Links-provide support to schools for outreach and engagement of their refugee student's parents
- Provide support for refugee parents to communicate and understand information from and about schools
- Encourage partnerships in refugee youth education

Questions?

Thank you!